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SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

by

ENID LENORE BOTCHETT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly in recent years attention has been directed to stress in students and the effects it has on their lives. Research indicates a need for pursuing the sources of stress as perceived by the students themselves within the cultural context of the school environment.

The primary purpose of this study was to describe sources of stress among elementary school students in the classroom and on the playground. Twenty-one students in a combined grade 5 and 6 classroom were the subjects of this observational study which took place over a period of two months. The researcher was both administrator and teacher in the setting.

In order to discover and portray the sources of stress as perceived by the students in this setting ethnographic research techniques of participant observation, journal writing and structured and unstructured interviews were used for the purpose of data collection. Qualitative methods of data analysis were used while data collection was going on and after data collection was complete.

Stress was conceptualized as the response of the body to a need; needs which were not met became sources of stress. The sources of the stressful experiences which emerged from the data collected during the observation period were reported in thirteen categories: Physical Activity, A Healthy Body, Friends, Family, Expectations, Communication, Evaluation, Responsibility, Self-Control, A Sense of Order, Sexual Identity, A Positive Self-Image and Changing Schools. Generous portions of the written material from student journals and spoken responses from student interviews and field notes were used.

Researcher interpretation, analysis and explanation comprise the descriptive element of the thesis. The findings of the study are capsulized in summary statements which conclude each category.

The observations of this study reveal that sources of stress are many and varied. As stress is relative to needs, almost anything at all can become a source of stress. The school provided a cultural environment in which an abundance of potentially stressful experiences existed. These experiences appeared constantly and were highly personalized and complex for the students within the school setting. Communication of stress experiences to trusted and/or informed individuals helped to alleviate the stress for the students. Students themselves were capable of developing the skills necessary to alleviate excessive stress in their lives.

Comparisons of the findings of this study with the findings in related studies cited in the literature and research chapter are drawn. Reflections on the methodology are included. Finally, implications for educational practice and recommendations for further research conclude the thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Increasingly in recent years attention has been directed to stress factors within the school environment which impinge upon the lives of the students within that setting. Publications written during this time by psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, professors, educators and parents address the urgent need for greater awareness of the nature of stress in children and its effects on them.

For approximately six or seven years in one of the formative stages of life, elementary school students experience stress in the more regulated setting of the classroom and the less regulated setting of the playground. Students experience stress with frequency and intensity unique to their own experiences. The manner in which they perceive and manage stress at this level will influence behavior, attitudes and perceptions as they progress throughout their student years and into adult life.

Significance of the Study

This study describes stress as it is experienced by grade 5 and 6 students in their natural school environment. Identification of the unique characteristics of stress in this setting may be the initial step towards awareness, understanding and control of the negative effects of excessive stress. Personnel within the organization are charged with assisting students in developing means of coping with stress. Therefore, the findings should be of use to administrators,

counselors, teachers and, in other words, all significant adults within the school setting who have some degree of influence over the organizational and interpersonal experiences of the students. The findings should also be of use to the students themselves in helping them control the effects of stress in their lives.

The design of the study which uses students as both subjects and respondents should enhance the knowledge of doing ethnographic research with children. In addition, the design of the study in which the researcher is administrator and teacher in the setting should provide an insight into the intricacies of performing these roles. The "rich data" and "thick description" required of ethnographic techniques should provide an adequate picture of the complexities of the culture of the classroom and playground.

Statement of the Problem

Elkind (1981:23-93) claims that the media, schools and parents are sources of ever-increasing stress experienced by today's youth. According to Parrot (1982:22)

> the rising incidence of alcohol and drug addiction, suicides, vandalism, juvenile delinquency and general apathy among youth is threatening to 'tear our social fabric apart at the seams.'

Kuczen (1982:145) reports that "depression is widespread among teenagers and has been reported in children as young as six years old." Suicide may result from depression which is left untreated. Miller (1982:115) states that "while suicide ranks tenth among the leading causes of death of America's general population it ranks second among young people." In addition, Youngs (1981:97) reports that recent data

indicate a significant increase in student deaths from stress-related cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Other stress-related diseases reported by Pelletier are (1977:7): hypertension, migraine headaches, arthritis, bronchitis, asthma and allergies.

Students who are highly stressed in school find it difficult to concentrate. Saunders (1984:30) claims that children who do not handle stress well are preoccupied, noncommunicative, uncooperative, isolated and frequently sick. They are lonely, dependent, frightened, worried and unable to seek the resources of others for company. Saunders adds that these children keep their feelings inside and are defensive and easily angered. They are generally negative in attitude. From the examination of the physiological and psychological effects of stress on children, it appears that excessive stress is taking its toll.

Although it is not possible or even desirable to avoid all stress, it may be possible to control or, at least, minimize the damaging physiological and psychological effects of excessive or prolonged stress. Adults and other students may help in this regard, provided more is known about stress as it is perceived by students in the school setting.

The central problem in this study was to describe stress as it is experienced by students in a grade 5 and 6 classroom within the elementary school environment utilizing ethnographic research techniques. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What sources of stress can be identified within the elementary school environment?

2. How does the student articulate experiences which are stressful?

3. What degree of control do students exhibit over the stress in their environment?

The questions were not formalized in that they required explicit answers from the researcher's observations. Rather, the questions stated here and those that developed during the observation period were used to orient the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Delimitations

1. Subjects of this study were twenty-one students in an urban elementary classroom. Six of the students were in grade 5 and fifteen of the students were in grade 6 in this combined grade classroom.

2. Although ethnographic studies usually depend upon an observer who becomes involved in a specific cultural environment over a long period of time (Sanday, 1979:527), this study extended over a period of two months. Intensive classroom observation and journal writing took place on twenty-two school days in May; structured student interviews took place in June.

Limitations

1. Effects of the participant observer, who was also the administrator and teacher in this case, upon the behavior of the respondents may have influenced the findings.

2. Qualitative measures may be viewed as biased. Therefore, triangulation of data collection techniques was used as a check of observer accuracy. Several "key informants" were used to check on the validity of the data analysis.

Assumptions

1. It was assumed that the students involved as subjects were open and honest in the information that they supplied.

2. It was also assumed that the researcher interpreted, analyzed, explained and described the information with accuracy and objectivity.

Organization of the Thesis

The study of stress in grade 5 and 6 students is organized into five chapters. Chapter One involves the significance of the study, statement of the problem, delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study, and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on a review of the related literature and research in the following areas: the culture of children in general and students in particular; and ethnographic methods of observation in educational research. In addition, stress in children and stress in students at school are discussed.

In Chapter Three the design of the study is outlined and the field testing of the research methodology is explained. Participant observation is examined under the following headings: entering the field, maintaining rapport and the role of the participant observer. In addition, collection and analysis of the data are discussed and ethical considerations are presented.

Chapter Four describes the experiences from which stress originates as revealed by students in grades 5 and 6. The description is enhanced by explanation and analysis of the data collected by participant observation, structured and unstructured interview and journal writing techniques. Organization of the data is presented in categories. The

summary statements of each category represent the findings of the study.

Chapter Five contains the observations based on the findings, the comparisons of the related literature and research and reflections on the methodology. Implications for educational practice and for further research conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature and Research

This chapter presents the concept of the culture of childhood, generally, and the culture of childhood in the smaller social world of the classroom, specifically. Educators, in the roles of administrator or teacher, are seen as being well suited both to understand and to articulate the meaning of the social context from the child's point of view. An ethnographic approach is viewed as an appropriate vehicle with which to interpret and describe this meaning. Stress provides the focus for this look at the child's way of viewing the world; the school provides the setting.

The Culture of Childhood

Spradley and McCurdy (1972:8,9) state that children in every society are taught to "see" the world in a particular way. Through a long process of socialization they learn to organize their perceptions, concepts and behaviors into a "theory of the world." This theory is then used to organize their own behavior, to anticipate the behavior of others and to make sense out of the world in which they live.

Anthropologist and psychologist Mary Goodman is credited with drawing attention to the culture of childhood through her cross-cultural studies which emphasize "what children see as they observe the world in which they find themselves." She encourages the discovering of the "child's eye view" for, she states, many adults

suffer from the inability (1970:3)

> to appreciate the extent of a child's perception, his ability to understand interpersonal relations, and his ability to cope with frustrations, tensions, and troubles.

She continues that a child's perceptions, understandings and abilities to handle emotions and problems are likely to differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from those of an adult.

Subsequent studies by Sitton and Mehaffy (1978:521-525) present the idea of the child's culture of the classroom and say that by studying that culture through child's eyes teachers and administrators can better understand the behaviors and reactions of the young with whom they come in contact. They encourage a belief in the culture itself (1978:525):

> behind what seems to be chaotic and formless behavior there is almost always a pattern, a method behind the seeming madness, a complex structure of cultural knowledge in the minds of the actors in the setting, which guides their behavior.

Educator John Holt (1983:270) encourages the observation of children in their native habitat of homes, schools, playgrounds and streets. He urges psychologists and educators to "mess about" with them, to look at children "patiently, repeatedly, respectfully, and to hold off making theories and judgments about them." Furthermore,

> we must use our minds differently. We must clear them of preconceived notions, we must suspend judgment, we must open ourselves to the situation, take in as much data as we can, and wait patiently for some kind of order to appear out of the chaos. In short, we must think like a little child.

These positions from the disciplines of social science research, anthropology, psychology and education argue strongly first, for the existence of the child's culture and second, for the examination of

the child's culture from the child's perspective. Goodman's statements regarding the differing perceptions of child and adult receive support from the studies of Yarrow and Campbell cited in Gordon. They are careful to add that neither the adult objective report nor the child's perceptual report is wrong but that each observer, adult or child (1966:121),

> observes from his own frame of reference, pays attention to the cues meaningful to him or invests meaning into behavior to match his already developed notions.

It follows, too, that the reporting of the child may not be couched in sophisticated terminology. Who, then, is an appropriate adult researcher who can interpret, analyze, explain and describe meaning within the child's social context?

Elliot Eisner (1978:621) states that the educator as educational critic can provide description, interpretation and evaluation of the classrooms he or she has seen, and in doing so, raise the level of awareness it is possible to secure. He urges the discovery of alternative forms of evaluating educational realities in the natural setting.

> What is needed is attention to the processes of classroom life and the use of forms of disclosure that can capture and convey what goes on in those settings we call classrooms and schools.

In addition, Eisner feels that educational connoisseurs who function as educational critics are best equipped to provide a vivid rendering of what goes on in classrooms.

In his book, Life in Classrooms, Jackson gives support to the concept of researcher as being one who is already very familiar with the school environment. He states that students, as well as teachers and administrators, can play a role (1968:175,176).

> In addition to participant observers it might be wise to foster the growth of observant participators in our schools—teachers, administrators, and perhaps even students, who have the capacity to step back from their own experiences, view them analytically, and talk about them articulately.

He recognizes and acknowledges the difficulties of performing as practitioner and researcher at the same time.

The culture of childhood, then, has as its central core the differing perceptions of children and adults. Within the educational setting of a school environment, the educator as researcher in the role of administrator or teacher has received support from the literature. What type of research methodology will uncover the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the students and best reflect in its portrayal the meaning that the culture has for its "actors"? Ethnography appears to be a most appropriate approach.

Ethnography in Educational Research

Within the broad concept of social anthropology, Wolcott's ethnography of the principalship, The Man in the Principal's Office, has become a model for educational research. Important concerns of this anthropological approach are describing rather than judging, attending carefully to context, and spending adequate time in the field in order to know the setting thoroughly. Emphasis of the approach is on social rather than on psychological dimensions of behavior. Wolcott's intent was to give an accurate portrayal of the world of one elementary school principal and, by extension, to identify those (1982:72) "behaviors, beliefs and circumstances shared by many, if not most, other elementary school principals."

Smith and Geoffrey (1968:3) term their study of the complexities

of an urban classroom a "microethnography of the classroom," for they had tried to describe carefully the small social system. Wolcott (1982:91), on reflection, states that he would call his study of the principalship a micro-ethnography for it also attempted to describe a particular micro-cultural system.

The dominant ethnographic techniques of participant observation and interviewing were used extensively by Cusick in his study of the student's world, Inside High School. Cusick (1973:230) found that the methodology operated at two levels, that of description and explanation. The researcher, through participant observation,

> (1) describes a social situation through the senses of the researcher and his subjects, and
> (2) explains the situation from the point of view of both the researcher and his subjects.

Spradley and McCurdy (1972:7) concur that it is description which distinguishes ethnography from other disciplines of cultural anthropology.

Spradley and McCurdy state further that ethnographic techniques are natural approaches within the educational context. Educators in their daily activities are ethnographers of sorts for they describe what people know and what they do. Children, too, act like ethnographers in the manner that (1972:13)

> they ask questions to discover what other people believe, what they mean by the words they use, and which forms of behavior are appropriate. And they are able to report their findings to their friends.

However, the ethnographer is systematic about both the observation and the accounting of that observation; in this he is more persistent, more thorough and more objective than the casual observer.

The common element of description highlights the importance of language in the transmission of culture. Hall's (1959) premise states that the transaction of a culture to an individual and the individual to a culture amounts to a "silent language." Much of this language is unspoken, unconscious and often quite subtle. He speaks not only of verbal language but of nonverbal language as well, this unconscious patterning of behavior which prescribes (1959:15) "our handling of time, our spatial relationships, our attitudes toward work, play, and learning." It is through verbal language that we say what we choose but it is through this nonverbal, or silent, language of behavior that our true feelings are communicated.

Geertz discusses description itself as the interpretation of cultures. He suggests that what the ethnographer is aiming for is "thick description," the describing of a culture with its multilayered social meaning. Out of a (1973:10) "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit," the ethnographer must understand behavior and grasp and render meaning.

This study, similar to Wolcott's study of the principalship, describes the stress experiences in grade 5 and 6 students in their educational milieu. Like the Smith and Geoffrey study, it attempts to come to terms with the complexities of the small social system. The description and explanation, as in Cusick's methodology, takes into account both the point of view of the subjects and the point of view of the researcher. Although analysis and interpretation are also integral components of the ethnographer's methodological processes,

"thick description" is the ultimate goal of the ethnographic account. In addition to verbal interaction, attention is paid to nonverbal behaviors and to the body language of the students.

Stress in Children

It may be argued that the information regarding child stress, though grounded in the theory of adult stress, until recently has not been treated in research as a separate entity. One example of this is the Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire by Holmes and Rahe (1967:213), initially developed for use with adults and currently used with children. Modified by Coddington (1972:7) for senior high, junior high and elementary school students, it has been used extensively in research by Yamamoto (1979:581), Yeaworth and York (1980: 90), Chandler (1981:164) and Ferguson (1981:973). Each researcher made adaptations to suit the nature of the particular study.

Yamamoto used sources from literature and suggestions of classroom teachers and identified twenty life events as potentially unpleasant which were then rated by fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Yeaworth and York developed an Adolescent Life Change Event scale "utilizing language believed meaningful to adolescents." Twenty-one items were rated by a total of two hundred seven boys and girls aged eleven to eighteen. Chandler modified Coddington's thirty-six life events by deleting ten and adding eleven items. Mental health professionals as well as teachers were asked to rate the events as to their severity in order to establish a source of stress inventory. Ferguson used Yeaworth and York's adaptation of Coddington's scale but added two items dealing with the issue of adolescent suicide.

Subjects in his study numbered twenty-five gifted and twenty-five non-gifted ninth grade students.

Each of the aforementioned studies, with the exception of the Coddington research, included children in the scoring of the instrument although none included children in the development of the instrument itself. Chandler (1981:166) argues for the inclusion of interviews with the child in order to secure further information on situations perceived to be stressful. Yamamoto's results show some disparity between evaluations determined by professionals and those determined by children; therefore, her conclusions would support the need for addressing the perceptions of stress by the children themselves (1979:582).

> . . . children assess the perceived stressfulness of varied life events in a discriminating manner. Experiences like the loss of sight, academic retainment, and pants-wetting were infrequently experienced yet very upsetting. Others like parental fights and being suspected of lying were rather common and stressful.

Her observations point out a limitation in the field of research. Although the revised life event scales deal with experiences which happen to school-age children, many of the experiences, such as loss of sight, happen infrequently, if at all. What is not accounted for here are the stressful experiences which happen more frequently and are evident within the context of the school setting. More recently, however, Youngs (1983:244) reports the results of a study which surveyed thousands of parents, teachers and students themselves in a quest to determine stressors and the signals by which we recognize them.

Writing about child stress and the school experience, Schultz and

Heuchert (1983:21,22) distinguish between physical and psychological reactions to stress, stating that in practice they interact with one another. Physiologically, we react to life events we perceive as potentially threatening in a standard manner which Selye (1978) called the "general adaptation syndrome." This includes: (a) the alarm reaction; (b) the stage of resistance and adaptation; and (c) the stage of exhaustion. Psychologically, we react to threatening situations to reduce stress in ways that have been successful to us in the past.

Physiologically, adults and children respond to stress identically. Psychologically, adults and children respond in uniquely individual ways. A child's psychological reaction to stressful experiences depends upon two factors; the child's perception of self and of the experience. McNamee states (1981:185):

> Reaction to a stressful life experience is dependent upon the child's perception of self and of the experience, perceptions which grow during childhood as the child reacts to one or another stressful life experience.

Reaction to stress is a factor in the maintenance of health. The manner of reaction is an index of the quality of health; the pattern of reaction laid down in childhood tends to persist throughout life.

Selye's definition of stress is often accepted as the conceptual basis for research (1974:14): "Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it." Selye's definition does not allow for the perception and interpretation of the individual in determining what experiences are or are not stressful. In a Maslowian sense, "need" is suggestive in physiological, psychological and sociological areas; the use of this term broadens Selye's definition

and allows for the perception and interpretation of the individual. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, "stress" is conceptualized as "the response of the body to a need."

Research supports the need for involving children in addressing and articulating their perceptions of stress. Stress in children is similar physiologically but dissimilar psychologically to adult stress. The definition of stress as "the nonspecific response of the body to a need" is accepted as the conceptual basis for this study. These needs can be physiological, psychological and sociological in nature.

Stress in School

At what point does stress become a reality for many children? Stroebel writes that (1982:178)

> young children seem to adapt happily, with very few related problems, until they encounter the discipline, confinement and pressure of parent expectations that accompany starting school at the age of 5 or 6.

Selye in The Stress of Life (1978:369-395) lists the major causes of stress in the lives of adults. Miller (1982:24,25) suggests that, applied to children, they become the fiber of their everyday lives. Many of the areas are summarized here because of their direct relationship to the student in school.

Miller contends that the school day is fraught with problems and pressures creating stress in class and in out-of-class settings with peer relationships and teacher interchanges. The child has many relationships to juggle and experiences these relationships intensely. Children react to weather changes more forcefully than adults: "schools are louder on rainy days; children are uncontrollable on

gray days; and more work is accomplished when the sun shines." Schools are notoriously crowded and teachers relate the degree of aggressive behavior to both size and space. Schools are accused of offering little to relieve the tedium of routine studies; children expect to be bored. Miller states further that loneliness is not uncommon; young children cling to a parent or a single friend; and preadolescents and teenagers cling to their peer group. The stress of captivity vibrates in any institution where students have little to say about the rules and regulations with which they must abide. School can be regarded as a continual relocation with the daily switch of classes and subjects and the yearly switch of teachers and classrooms. Children regard a failed test, a disloyal friend, or ridicule by a teacher as a catastrophe. Anxiety is almost a normal state for children as they are uncertain about achievement, personal appearance and acceptance.

For many children, especially the gifted and the sociable, states Wolff (1981:156),

> school provides thrills, pleasure, and a sense of achievement and belonging, compensating in some cases for stresses and disadvantages within the home and the neighborhood. But for others school itself is stressful.

Certainly the potential for stress in school is always present, writes Sylvester (1983:3), in a bureaucratic organization with intense interpersonal relationships, time/space restrictions, and constant evaluation of effort.

Youngs' study of student stress produced a documentation of the major stresses and the signals by which we recognize them at each grade level from kindergarten to grade twelve. The results of the

fifth and sixth grades are as follows (1983:260,261).

Fifth grade

Stressor	Signal
1. Fear of being selected last on any team.	1. Wants to avoid playing "this stupid game"; also, is absent (sick) on a given day.
2. Fear of losing "best friend" or that friend will share "secrets."	2. Jealously guards best friend.
3. Fear of not being able to complete school work.	3. Procrastinates on task assignments; carelessly completes work.
4. Fear of peer disapproval.	4. Expects to select own clothing; own activities; own friends.
5. Fear of not being a "big sixth grader" next year.	5. Continually generates information/concern about grades or "passing."

Sixth grade

Stressor	Signal
1. Fear of not being selected on a team.	1. Wants to avoid "this stupid game"; also, is absent (sick) on a given day.
2. Fear of the unknown concerning their own sexuality.	2. Shares gossip/rumors/myths/jokes concerning sexuality in all species.
3. Fears not passing into middle school/junior high.	3. Renewed concentration on homework, or pronounced procrastination.
4. Fears disapproval of peers about appearance.	4. Renewed emphasis on appearance, experimentation with hair, clothes, etc.
5. Fears being unpopular.	5. Begins to select numerous friends, but guards a selected friend (same sex).

Youngs' study lists stressors preceded by the word "fear" at the grades 5 and 6 level. In the same study "concern," "worry" and "uncertainty" are used at other levels. The Schultz and Heuchert (1983:38-52) analysis of student interviews shows that they reveal stress in their own words. Some students get "mad" and "upset." Others are "hyper," "scared," "hurting" and "screwed up." In this

study, structured interviews are designed to elicit responses about student problems, concerns, worries and troubles. The researcher is sensitive to the variety of terms the students use to describe stress experiences in the field notes, journal writing and in structured and unstructured interviews.

School and schooling, by their very natures, produce stress in multitudinous ways. The general description Miller adapts from Selye's details on adult stressors and the grade specific information Youngs' reports from interviews with parents, teachers and students, contribute to the growing fund of knowledge of student stress. This study adds to that body of knowledge by describing in a highly specific context sources of stress in the natural setting of a grade 5 and 6 classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter contains a review of the overall design of the research in general, including the intent and results of field testing of the methodology. More specifically, participant observation is explored with reference to entering the field, maintaining rapport and establishing the roles required of the participant observer as researcher and teacher. Both the purposes of and processes involved in the data collection are explained and analysis of the data is outlined. The ethical considerations of the research design are presented.

Design of the Study

This ethnographic study sought to describe sources of stress as perceived by the students within the school environment. The subjects of the study were twenty-one grade 5 and 6 students enrolled in one classroom of an urban elementary school. Of the six grade 5 students, four were boys and two were girls; of the fifteen grade 6 students, eight were boys and seven were girls. Chronological age ranged from ten to thirteen years of age. Class composition was heterogeneous with differing levels of academic capabilities, social maturity, emotional development and physical prowess. Two of these students went to once-a-week enrichment classes; one of these students received help from an aide in mathematics. Two students had been referred for behavioral monitoring; only one of these two had been referred for

testing because of the perceived discrepancy between achievement and apparent ability.

The researcher was the administrator and a classroom teacher at Green Hill School. Normally, sixty percent of the time was available for administrative responsibilities and forty percent of the time was spent teaching mathematics, music and art to the grade 5 and 6 students. However, during the observation period, the time allotted for administrative responsibilities was spent in the classroom gathering data for the research. At that time, Mr. Jim Brown taught language arts, science, social studies, physical education and health to these students.

The setting was a fairly homogeneous neighborhood which was about thirty years old. Generally speaking, the community was stable with a mixture of two-parent and one-parent families. The building, originally designed to accommodate twice the number of students it holds today, was well maintained. A locally-based day care centre shared the facilities during the day and some community-sponsored activities were carried on at the school in the evenings.

Field Testing of the Methodology

Field testing of the methodology took place in another location in the middle of May during one week of the school year prior to the school year of the actual study. Four goals, which were primarily concerned with the process of observation, were established and met. As a result of the field testing the following changes were made to the original design:

1. journal writing was substituted for case study analysis; and

2. individual structured interviews were substituted for group structured interviews.

As well as defining and refining data collection techniques, the field testing provided the researcher with the confidence that student stress experiences could be perceived and articulated. A full description of the field testing is included in Appendix A.

Participant Observation

"Participant observation" refers to naturalistic qualitative research in which the investigator obtains information through relatively intense, prolonged interaction with those being studied and firsthand involvement in the relevant activity of their lives (Levine and others, 1980:38). Entering the field, maintaining rapport and establishing roles which facilitate data collection are essential components of this methodology.

Entering the Field

Permission to engage in this research was obtained through the Department of Research and Design of the City Public Schools. Approval was granted by:

1. completing an application form to engage in the Cooperative Activities Program established between the university and City Public Schools;

2. meeting with the Associate Superintendent in charge of the area in which the school for the study was located;

3. meeting with the classroom teacher who was to share the grade 5 and 6 teaching responsibilities; and

4. presenting the research design and intent at a staff meeting.

In addition, a letter was sent home informing the parents of the research and assuring them that observations would not disrupt normal classroom routine and learning. Confidentiality would be assured. (A copy of this letter is included in Appendix B.) In order to accommodate the need for confidentiality all names and locations have been altered. Also, specific references which would identify any individual within the study have been changed to adhere to the ethical principles involved in research on human beings.

Wilson states that (1977:254) "the ethnographer is sensitive to the way he enters a setting and carefully establishes a role that facilitates the collection of information." The administrator was appointed to Green Hill School and attempted to build an atmosphere of openness and trust among the staff and students. Administrator presence in the classroom and on the playground was regarded as natural. Informal interviews with individual students and small groups of students were carried out from the beginning of the school year. Consequently, the actual data-gathering techniques were not regarded as obtrusive in May and June.

Maintaining Rapport

Miller (1969:88) poses the problem of maintaining "rapport combined with objectivity"; that is, the delicate balance between establishing enough rapport in order to get the cooperation in the study and preventing the rapport from hindering the study. A personal note from the cooperating classroom teacher suggested that this

delicate balance was accomplished. "As for (the researcher's) field work, it was easily accommodated since the class was not disturbed in any way by her presence or recording techniques." Since the data collected for the purpose of the research study were of great value for the administrator and teacher roles, the amount of time and attention required by one aspect of the participant observer role did not in a negative manner interfere with the responsibilities of the others.

Role of the Participant Observer

The participant observer is the administrator, teacher and researcher in this study. Sitton and Mehaffy (1978:521-525) express confidence that the role shift required is "very productive of cultural information." Wolcott adds a cautious statement (1973:7):

> The role of participant and observer are essentially complimentary and mutually exclusive; the more perfectly you activate one, the less perfectly you activate its reciprocal.

Smith, as university researcher, and Geoffrey, as classroom teacher, differentiate their nonparticipant observer and participant observer roles in the same setting (1968:9-12). Geoffrey recognizes that the major advantage of being the participant observer, or classroom teacher, is the ability to manipulate the setting. Smith maintains that the major advantage of the nonparticipant observer, or researcher, is that removed from the constant interaction and personal involvement one might be able to report the whole picture with more detail and more accuracy.

However, the complexities, difficulties and frustrations of this research design are continually acknowledged throughout documentation in the researcher's journal and in the field notes.

> If it wasn't so amusing I'd have to call the observation and recording today a total, dismal failure. Recording while teaching, being on supervision or even monitoring activities as an administrator is difficult.
>
> If it weren't for the fact that Jim (Brown) has allowed me in the room while he is teaching, this study would be absurd and/or nonexistent.
>
> May 1, 1985

Collection of the Data

Data collection techniques produced observations from field notes, journal writing and interviews. Each type of data provided information in a particular format; each provided a cross-check for consistency and integrity of the other. Intensive classroom observation, unstructured interviewing and journal writing took place on twenty-two school days in May; structured interviewing took place in June. "Key informants," students and other teachers who shared the responsibilities of these students, acted as informal consultants to check the validity of the observations.

Field Notes

Field notes are a vehicle for the researcher to record in a stream of consciousness fashion highly detailed information in a relatively unstructured manner. Field notes produced volumes of detail, spontaneous flashes of insight and leisurely musings.

The field notes were of three types: computer print-outs, hand-written field notes and those "read" into and transcribed from the

portable tape recorder. An Apple IIe computer with AppleWorks word processing program was used extensively in the classroom. During field trips, lessons in other locations and classes outside, handwritten field notes were used. At recess, a portable tape recorder and handwritten field notes were used.

Print-outs and typewritten transcripts were completed on the weekends by the researcher and filed chronologically in a binder; class-time observations were interspersed with out-of-class observations in their natural order and all were color coded for easy reference.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a means by which students can contend with new information, discover relationships, analyze situations and clarify ideas. Journal writing produced concrete, verbatim information in a highly personalized style.

Journal writing took place for ten minutes each day in May, immediately after the morning announcements were made. All students and the researcher wrote. Students were encouraged to write about anything they wanted: experiences, feelings, thoughts, ideas, creative writing or plans. Although helpful to the language arts program, this writing was not marked or evaluated. The researcher read each journal each day and replied to each entry with the intention of being supportive and nonjudgmental. Information was strictly confidential.

At the end of each of the five weeks the complete entries were copied, coded and filed by the researcher. At the same time, significant excerpts were marked and typed on 5" x 8" file cards; the

information included the student name, excerpt and date of journal entry. The file cards were clipped to indicate the week of the written submission.

Interviews

Structured student interviews took place after the intense period of classroom and playground observation was complete. Volunteers were requested and all but three students indicated an interest in participating. Of the eighteen willing students, time permitted the interviewing of thirteen of them.

The interview took place during school time in the principal's office—a sunny, plant-filled room with art prints, photographs and children's work on display. A portable tape recorder was in full view on a table top; the student upon entering was asked to write his or her name on the tape and label along with the date of the interview.

Questions were designed to elicit responses about student problems, concerns, troubles and worries. Interviews allowed the researcher an opportunity to ask for direct information, additional information or student opinion on an issue. Initially, the questions were designed specifically for each student ahead of time using basic detail from field notes or journal entries. It quickly became apparent that this was not necessarily the most effective approach. Consequently, the researcher reviewed the journal for a few minutes before each student arrived and focused on one or two ideas with which to guide the interview. The length of the interviews varied from ten minutes to thirty minutes, depending upon the completeness of the responses and the willingness of the student to pursue these experiences and perceptions

in depth. At the end of the interview, the student was asked if he or she had a question for the researcher. The question was asked, the tape recorder was turned off and the question was answered. After the student left a brief comment was written as to how the interview went. Transcriptions of the tapes were done by the researcher at the end of the week.

Researcher's Comments

The researcher's feelings, interpretations of what was observed and other things that came to mind as suggested by Bogdan (1972:43) were recorded both in a structured manner in an accompanying journal and in a spontaneous manner in the handwritten and computer field notes. These personal reflections stimulated additional questions which continued to guide the research inquiry, provided information which helped determine the integrity of the observations, and contributed to a better understanding of the effect of the participant observer on the subjects.

Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the data took place both while the data were being collected and after the data collection was complete (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Earlier, the literature on stress in students, a university course in research design and field testing of the methodology assisted in establishing a research focus, the type of study and format for reporting. During field work categories began to emerge from the data guided by the research questions, analytic questions developed during observation and the observations themselves. These

were purposely recorded in random order so as not to impose a rigid structure too early in the observation. Sample categories recorded mid-way through the observation period are included in Appendix C.

After the intensive period of observation was over at the end of May, the researcher made permanent records of all field notes and journal excerpts. After the interviewing and transcribing were completed in mid-June, the researcher distanced herself from the study.

At the beginning of the final data analysis in July, two additional copies of the field notes, journal excerpts and interview transcripts were made. One of the copies was designated the "cut and paste" copy. As the researcher had worked with recording, printing, typing and transcribing of the data categories continued to emerge.

Each category had as a common element a basic need of the student. Examples within each category demonstrated how the student addressed that need. Generally speaking, if the need was unsatisfied for a period of time, if satisfying one need was inappropriate in the setting, if the need couldn't be met by the student, or if one need greatly overshadowed another, it was considered as a source of stress.

Examples from the first copy of the data were cut and pasted on to long sheets of paper and placed into file folders labeled with the category heading (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982); each example was assigned the date and time of recording. The examples were further analyzed, arranged in logical sequence for reporting and a first draft of the category was written to include as many pertinent examples as possible within a meaningful context. Material which suited more than one category was assigned to the area in which it was most appropriate in

order to guard against duplication. Thirteen categories emerged which were broad enough to include all pertinent data. After the categories were written in first draft form, coding of selected data on the second copies served as a check to ensure significant information was included and necessary revisions were made. Third copies of the data, without researcher notation, remain as permanent records.

Samples of second copy coded data are included in the appendices: field notes of Wednesday, May 8, appear in Appendix D; excerpts from a student journal appear in Appendix E; and the transcription of a student interview appears in Appendix F.

As the basic problem of the research was to describe sources of stress in grade 5 and 6 students, the reporting of the data attempted to recreate the complexity of the small social system of the classroom and playground. Generous portions of student interview and journal writing materials were used in order to capture and portray the uniqueness of each response. Field notes, too, were liberally used for they provide an on-site, spontaneous adult response from the participant observer perspective. Little attempt was made to correct grammatical errors in recording provided the meaning of the entry was clear. The findings are presented at the end of each of the thirteen categories and portray in summary form the sources of stress as expressed by the students.

After the first draft was completed some interested adults were engaged to read and respond to the study from various perspectives. Among them were the classroom teacher who cooperated in the study, a practising child psychologist, parents and recent college graduates.

Advice and counsel from the thesis advisor were sought and welcomed.

Ethics

Spradley (1979:34-39) discusses ethical principles which should be taken into consideration when doing research with humans. He suggests that informants be considered first and their rights, interests and sensitivities be safeguarded. Research objectives should be communicated and the privacy of informants protected. Informants should not be exploited and reports should be made available to them.

In this study, the students were informed that the researcher wished to study their interactions in the classroom and on the playground. The researcher would be around a little more often than before and use data collection equipment which was then briefly demonstrated. They were not expected to behave differently. The information letter to parents elicited no questions about the research objectives or the nature of the observation itself. All students were encouraged to write in their journals but no reprimand followed if little or nothing was written. Interviews were a matter of personal choice.

The first draft report was made available for comment and correction to the classroom teacher who cooperated in the study. The finished report will be made available to the students who wish to read it in the privacy of the principal's office.

Summary

This ethnographic study sought to describe stress within the school environment as perceived by students. The subjects were twenty-one

students in a grade 5 and 6 combined classroom in which the teaching responsibilities were shared by the researcher and a cooperating teacher, allowing the researcher role shifts between nonparticipant and participant observer in the same setting. The participant observation considerations of entering the field, maintaining rapport and establishing the roles required for data collection were explored. Field notes, journals and interviews yielded rich data in specific styles and cross-checking of these data ensured consistency and integrity. Analysis of the data occurred during and after field work. The description of the sources of stress is reported in thirteen categories. The findings are presented as summary statements at the conclusion of each category. Ethical considerations of the study were outlined.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sources of Stress Among Elementary Students

This chapter describes the experiences of grade 5 and 6 students from which stress originates. This description involves interpretation, analysis and explanation of the data collected by the following methods: participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews and journal writing.

In the report on the data, participant observation field notes are single-spaced and indented five spaces. Each item of conversation is preceded by the speaker's name and marked by quotation marks. An example follows.

> Mr. Brown: "Andrew, what did Matthew just say?"
> Andrew: "I didn't hear."
> Martin: "He said he didn't hear."
> Andrew: (Silence, looking a little embarrassed)
> Mr. Brown: "Andrew, what are you going to do?"
> Martin: (Answering for Andrew) "Listen!"
> Andrew: (Silence, still looking a little like he is on the spot.)
>
> May 24, 1985

Interview information is also single-spaced and indented five spaces. Each item of conversation is preceded by the speaker's name but is not marked by quotation marks.

> Researcher: Well, Grant, we've been interrupted so I'm going to ask you now what it feels like to be interviewed.
>
> Grant: Well, it feels OK. It's a lot easier than I thought it would be. You know, 'cause when you think of being interviewed you think of little dark rooms with the Gestapo running around you with the bright lights and all that. But, really, it's easy. Somehow to (be) interview(ed) is a lot easier than I thought it would be.
>
> June 5, 1985

Journal entries are single-spaced and indented ten spaces. Spelling, grammar and spacing are maintained to convey, as much as possible, the authentic flavor of the writing.

> No (I don't no why) this is
> always coming up in my
> mind but I always want
> to tell you (this journal) about
> my personal stuff, yo 'no? but
> me, I yousualy don't tell parents
> (older people) my personal stuff!
> Mabey my mom but not any
> one else. Mabey it's because
> this is in confedence (u-n-me
> stuff) So Mabey I will tell
> you next time (tomorrow)
>
> (All brackets by Michelle)
> May 2, 1985

Words or phrases marked by brackets in any of these examples indicate researcher additions which should clarify the intention of the subject or provide more information for the context of the experience. Exceptions are indicated. All entries are dated.

Data, collected by these methods and marked in these ways, are reported in thirteen categories. Preceding the description of each category is a brief explanation of the term and its usage in the section. Following each description is a summary which constitutes the findings of the study.

Neither the sequence of the categories nor the number of pages included in each is designed to suggest the degree of importance.

Physical Activity

Room 2 is a beehive of activity—some overt and some covert, some related to instruction, and some not related to instruction. Students exhibit a need to move whether in the desk, within the classroom or

out of the classroom. Games in school and organized activity after school hours may allow expression of this need. Movement, gesture and play are discussed in terms of this physical activity.

Restricted to desks for part of the time, some students find ways to stretch or move within these confines.

> Martin, kneeling on the seat and half out of his desk with head on the table top and rear end in the air, is planning with Geoff.
>
> May 10, 1985

Movement may help some students keep on task or to stay relaxed.

> David is constantly pulling at his hair as he concentrates. He's been very quiet and compliant since this morning.
>
> May 10, 1985

Mary Beth explained, in an interview, that moving her feet while doing a mathematics test meant she did not have a migraine headache.

Gestures, too, allow movement within a limited space. In this case, gesture is used to help formulate an idea before it is committed to paper.

> Dennis is gesturing and acting out his story as he consults with Marnie in order to write an assignment.
>
> May 3, 1985

Gesture can be a powerful communicator of feelings:

> David has a collection of pencils on his desk that are pieces. Whenever he wants to show his frustration at some directive given by the teacher, he breaks a pencil.
>
> May 24, 1985

Gesture of feelings between people can be a destructive force in the classroom.

> David and Ross are becoming masterful at making fun of people behind their backs with nonverbal gestures.
>
> May 13, 1985

The classroom offers many areas to which students can move: the water fountain, the pencil sharpener, the office area, the corner, computer centres, the teacher's desk and another student's desk. As the water fountain is within the glassed-in office and, therefore, use of it is easily monitored, permission does not have to be obtained to get a drink of water. Frequent use is noted just before and after recesses, noon and after school breaks. Limited use is not discouraged when directions are given or even when instruction occurs. The fountain can provide a means of social contact, either going to or from that location, or by remaining there.

> 1:58 p.m. John to take a drink of water. (He) wanders back to (his) desk and stops at Tom's desk.
> Tom: "Move along, John!"
>
> 2:00 p.m. Richard (goes) to the drinking fountain. Tom joins him.
>
> May 6, 1985

As well, the fountain can provide the means to escape a rather awkward situation.

> Martin, when it was time for him to play the recorder piece this morning, was in the little office taking a drink of water and wiping his mouth on a paper towel. It seemed to take him a long time to get out of there.
>
> May 24, 1985

Movement to each of these spaces within the classroom can be used in order to take a break from work, to have a stretch, to obtain something, to make some social contact or to temporarily remove oneself from one situation to another.

Permission must be granted to move to areas outside of the classroom. Acceptable destinations with certain restrictions are the office, the library, the gym or the washroom. The reason for needing

to go to the washroom is often assumed; asking the student would not be considered necessary. Both Grant and David use the experience for additional reasons or other reasons:

> Grant returns from the washroom with some kind of arm actions saying, "Boom, boom, boom!" David (goes) to the washroom—taking just a little bit too long.
>
> May 2, 1985

Play by oneself, with a partner or in a group, occurs frequently. Play, in this context, may be considered as some form of involvement not expected by the nature of the activity, lesson or assignment set forth by the teacher. As recorded in the field notes, play can be done with real toys or imaginary ones, and with utensils such as pencils, rulers, and geometry sets (May 13, 1985) generally used for work. Making things, such as a macramé cord (May 7, 1985) or a fortune telling paper model (May 2, 1985) and drawing pictures or characters (May 30, 1985) is a creative form of play which produces a finished product. Play can be the tapping of a shoe (May 6, 1985) or the drumming of a pencil on the desk. It can involve playing with a Cabbage Patch doll (May 8, 1985).

Much play takes place while instruction is given; yet, the student may be able to assimilate the content well.

> Mark has been drawing all through the instructions given by Mr. Brown. The activities are lead-up types of activities needed before Track Meet. Mark, as soon as Mr. Brown is finished giving instructions, is offering to help Dennis find the key to the gym (in order to set up the equipment).
>
> May 30, 1985

Mark had been listening, as well as drawing, and understood clearly what the teacher meant to have the class do in phys. ed. so that he could help a classmate set up activity centres in preparation for class.

Partner play occurs, in the following examples, in order to emphasize a request for assistance, as an interruption from work, and as a substitution from work. Lori has been absent frequently from class because of a chronic asthmatic condition; she requires help with her assignments when she returns to class.

> Lori and Michelle are quietly talking together (at Michelle's desk). Lori is being really physical and touching Michelle as she stretches back. Lori massages her gently by the throat. Michelle goes over to help Lori with her work.
>
> May 2, 1985

This gentle touching emphasizes the request for help and Michelle complies.

Mark and Wendy are mutually working on a social studies assignment when play momentarily diverts them from the work at hand.

> Mark and Wendy are suddenly playing by tickling each other and having a little wrestling match. It lasts only approximately 40 seconds. They continue to work on their lessons after this little interruption.
>
> May 10, 1985

In both examples, play serves to enhance the communication and relationship between the players. In the following example, play serves as a vehicle to break off a partnership that is, momentarily, not productive.

> Martin and Geoff have a little confrontation in the two desks which are out of sight from the teacher. Martin, playfully, tries to put pen marks on Geoff's arm. Geoff, finally putting an end to it, says, "Piss off!"
>
> May 10, 1985

Games such as Dungeons and Dragons and Champions and activities such as those in the Ninja magazines are reference points for many students determining, to some degree, with whom they will associate.

> Matthew is one of the boys who does not really participate in the kind of games played by most of the grade 6 boys. David plays games that are active and hardly shows any interest

> whatsoever in the mind games played by the others. John is always on the periphery, trying to make it in the circle. The core group of Richard, Martin, Andrew, Geoff and Tom are involved and the number in the group changes. Of the grade 5 students, Grant is very involved. Dennis never really shows any interest. Mark (is) not really involved with their games either. None of the girls are included in this interest nor are they actively excluded from it.
>
> May 10, 1985

Enthusiasm is high for their self-determined activity!

> Richard and Tom carry on a relationship evident outside at recess when Richard brought to school a computerized report of material from Dungeons and Dragons. They relate happily (to each other) and openly to me the amusing material: descriptions of creatures and their prowess, their abilities and their enemies.
>
> May 13, 1985

Interference sometimes results from disruption of class activity or lack of attention to quality work.

> Richard gives an answer when he is asked but it does not have the same spontaneity as his answers did outside when he was talking about Dungeons and Dragons. His answer when he gives it is complete.
>
> May 13, 1985

These activities carried on during and after school hours provided mental stimulation and evoked creative imagination. Groups formed because the student wanted to be involved either with the activity itself or with the group involved with it. To some degree the individual achieved status by involvement with this identifiable group.

After hour activities provided opportunities for group or individual participation and competition in sports and dancing. Elizabeth was challenged by swimming lessons she struggled with; she fears to fail a third attempt at the green level.

> Im going to be starting
> my swimming lessons
> today. Im in level
> green. This will be my
> third time taking it, I
> hope I pass!
>
> May 14, 1985

Mary Beth is heavily involved in competitive dancing.

> Last night there was dancing at
> St. John's Cathedral. We practised
> and learn a new step. I have a
> load to practise for Saturday.
>
> May 16, 1986

Organized after hour sports such as baseball and soccer provided challenges with real concerns.

> Last night we had
> a baseball game in
> Castle Downs. We beat
> the other team 22-15.
> It was getting to be
> a rough game in the sixth
> inning.
>
> May 7, 1985

Both the physical hurt and the injustice of rough play are concerns for Geoff. Lori, on the other hand, has to contend with the tedium of practice.

> Dear journal yesterday was a very borring day
> at the practice because all we did was play
> catch and talk and then Manueal would
> hit us the ball and we would try to catch the
> ball when it was in the air or if it was a
> grounder we would run up to it and catch
> it on the ground.
>
> May 16, 1985

Nancy must learn to deal with defeat.

> We lost 25-0! But
> they haven't lost a game yet.
> They won 1st place in A division in the
> tournament. We only played
> 3 inings and our coach called it
> off . . .

Our coach said she
wouldn't have mind if we
lost but our field work was
terrible!

May 24, 1985

Organized activity is both challenging and stressful in many ways: learning to play cooperatively with others, practising the necessary skills needed to play well and learning how to accept defeat.

Andrew's whirlwind of activity is natural to him; stress results for Andrew when he cannot maintain the pace. For another student the pace might be too fast.

Tomorrow we are
going to the park if
it is nice. If its
realy nice we might
even go to the beach.
Last weekend we
went to the beach.
We went to lake
Eden. last night me and richard
went to the science
center and worked the
computers. then we
went back to his
house and watched
Enter the ninja. At
least part of it.
Then Richard went
to his soccer game.
So I went home
and Magnun. Then I
went to bed.

Both activity and non-activity can be stressful experiences.

The end of the week
is coming up fast, and
I will naturally be
bored with nothing to do.

May 22, 1985

Findings

Movement, gesture and play are ways in which students express their need for physical activity in the classroom. Students become anxious when these needs are not met and stress can result for the individual. Yet, problems can also occur for the class when such activity is nonproductive or creates problems for others or when this activity is inappropriate in length or in timeliness. Games and activities, too, can bring about stressful experiences. Games sometimes determine social acceptance in a group. Interference can result from disruption of class activity or lack of attention to work. Individual activity involves competition with self or others and fear of failure. Organized sports can be stressful in learning to play cooperatively, practising necessary skills and learning how to accept defeat. Both too much activity and no activity at all can be stressful.

A Healthy Body

Asthma, allergies and bronchitis are considered stress-related disorders of the body and are, for the purposes of this discussion, considered to be relatively permanent conditions. Conditions concerning the teeth, eyes and ears are discussed, as are migraine headaches and nervousness. Temporary physical conditions are colds and accidents and the emotional hurt and feeling of isolation that accompany not feeling well.

Five of twenty-one students suffered from asthmatic, allergic or bronchial problems which affected them in various ways. Mark's family realized he was beginning to exhibit signs of having allergic reactions.

> Apparently, Mark has allergies which are preventing him from sleeping at night. He (is) a little slower to respond, has black marks under his eyes, picks at his eyes and coughs.
>
> May 13, 1985

Medical diagnosis was begun on May 24; a partial battery of tests confirmed that Mark did indeed have allergic reactions.

Dennis' allergies had been diagnosed previously; his symptoms included watery bubbles which appeared on his ears and then burst open to emit a liquid. He made weekly visits to the doctor for shots; this medication kept his condition somewhat under control. Only when asked did Dennis respond about his illness; he often modified his own physical activity to accommodate any discomfort he experienced.

Richard's allergies, also diagnosed earlier, gave him considerable trouble throughout the observation period.

> Richard has strange habits of rubbing his teeth back and forth and sniffing.
>
> May 2, 1985

> Richard does not easily admit his capacities and pushes himself when he must meet general standards. The teeth grinding and grimacing had to do with a canker he has on the inside of his mouth.
>
> Last night Richard's mother explained about his allergies and his medication for allergies. When he tried to perform the Canada Fitness endurance run last year, he got into a lot of trouble. When he attempted to complete the distance, he virtually collapsed and almost had to be carried home.
>
> May 3, 1985

> Richard's allergies are bothering him. He sniffs a lot, pulls at his nose, and breathes through his mouth.
>
> May 13, 1985

This condition meant that Richard often looked distracted in class. At these times, he misunderstood directions and had faulty perceptions of behavioral and academic expectations.

Sickness at school and curtailed physical activity on the weekend were Lori's experiences with her asthma.

> Dear journal on Friday I was
> sick because my asma started
> to act up and on
> Saturday my asma started to
> get worse and on Sunday
> my asma started to get
> better and I went to baseball
> practice and it was boring
> because I couldn't run at all
> and now every 15 minutes I
> feel like to up chuck because
> I getting better but I
> feel aful.
>
> May 6, 1985

A lengthy absence of 8.0 days out of 22.0 resulted from Alexandra's continuing struggle with bronchitis.

> I am back at school
> to stay now but I am
> still a little bit sick.
> I hope to be better soon.
> I am sure I have a
> lot of work to catch
> up on. I'll do my best
> to get as much done
> as I can. Today
> is my first whole day
> back and I'm glad to
> be here for good! I don't
> like being sick. There
> is always something
> wrong with me, but
> it isn't very often serious.
>
> May 14, 1985

Two students had regular appointments to have braces or retainers adjusted. Matthew never commented except to explain his absence from school. For Elizabeth, however, the experience is painful.

> On Wednesday I have
> to get my braces
> tightened. It does
> hurt but my Mom
> and my brother tell me "in the

end it's all worth it!"
My brother had his
on for 5 years.

I get them off in
about 1-2 more years.

May 28, 1985

Two students wear glasses. Wendy experiences a temporary lack of control between the time one broken set is replaced with a new pair of glasses.

Today I don't have much
to write exept that I picking out
new glasses today and I hope
the rest of the day goes
better.

May 23, 1985

She feels she does not function as well without being able to see easily; she is much relieved when she wears her new pair.

For Mary Beth, on the other hand, being without her glasses is a momentary embarrassment.

Elizabeth: I just want to see you without your glasses.
Mary Beth: No!
Elizabeth: I've seen you lots of time without your glasses.

May 27, 1985

Elizabeth, on the other hand, has a hearing problem which she attributes to her father's side of the family. This disability requires her to be close to the front of the room and have her right ear directed towards the teacher.

Researcher: Does it worry you every once in a while?

Elizabeth: Sometimes, yah! It's kind of embarrassing. "What? What? What?" But, mostly, I guess it doesn't bug me that much.

June 12, 1985

Over the years she has learned to adapt generally well to a situation

which can be temporarily awkward for her.

Mary Beth suffers considerably from migraine headaches which had begun at an earlier age:

> Mary Beth: I think it was in grade 3 that I started getting really nervous about tests 'cause it got harder and harder . . .
>
> June 12, 1985

Occurrence of the migraines coincided with the school week and with the onset of tests.

> Mary Beth: Well, I get them on Mondays . . . I relax on Saturday and Sunday and then I tense up again . . . a headache comes and then it gets so bad that, you know, the other Monday night I just . . . I was screaming in pain because, see, there was a math test and I just got over relaxing on the weekend.
>
> June 12, 1985

When she suffers from a migraine, she is pale, presses her hands to her head, keeps very still and feels a pricking sensation in her shoulders. The migraine prevented her both from studying and from performing well on the test.

Few students mentioned being nervous before tests. Tom's journal entry suggests that this may have been an isolated incident; he might have been apprehensive because he didn't prepare for the test or because he anticipated not having done as well as he would have liked.

> For the most part I was feeling well but as soon as we started the test I got nerves and started feeling weird and I also had a small headache. And I would like to know my math mark.
>
> May 15, 1985

Mary Beth suffers from nervousness frequently. She is supportive of

a proposed nutrition program because she feels she could benefit from it. She writes this in a nutrition survey.

> My mom and dad and my brother are worrying about me because I'm not putting on my weight! They try to force me to eat, but I can't. I am absolutely ravenous in the morning at 7:45 but I feel sick in the morning because of something called "bad nerves!"
>
> May 7, 1985

Two other girls also do not eat breakfast in the morning.

Physical conditions of a temporary nature, such as an accident or a cold, can cause stress for students for a variety of reasons. Judith laments the silliness of the situation which prompted the injury.

> I don't know how well I can
> write. I hurt my thumb
> last night. I was
> playing with my next
> door neighbor's dog
> and my hand smucked into
> her teeth and now I've
> got a sore thumb!
>
> May 10, 1985

Geoff's journal entry implies annoyance with himself because of the lack of caution which caused the injury.

> Yesterday I was bike
> riding with Matthew
> we were playing around
> the Science Centre and
> I jumped off something
> a little high and didn't
> land properly. And now my
> foot hurts but I'm going
> to the doctor at 10:00.
>
> May 16, 1985

Later, Geoff's activity and involvement is restricted by having to use crutches.

> Geoff came in this morning with crutches and immediately said that he didn't think they were necessary. He could walk fine without them. He figured that the broken bone was in his heel; that meant there was not much weight on it, and that it couldn't

> cause any permanent damage. Geoff does not usually go on so much about an issue. This incident obviously means a lot to him.
>
> May 21, 1985

Grant is unable to participate fully as he is expected to.

> Grant had an agonizing time at the board this morning when he tried to explain a two-step problem. He just looked zonked out. When I commented on this, he said he was coming down with a cold.
>
> May 21, 1985

Matthew is unable to handle the physical and emotional hurt himself.

> Matthew entered the room and sat down with extremely red, bloodshot eyes. He had apparently been trying to take care of himself in the bathroom. He had been playing baseball, was trying to tag Michelle while she came running towards home plate and had run into her elbow.
>
> May 14, 1985

Matthew's face was bruised and his mother had to be called to take him to the doctor for examination. It was only when she arrived and he could place himself totally in her care that he wept openly. In addition to feeling terrible because of a cold, Geoff suffers because being home alone is being isolated from others.

> It was pretty boaring
> at home on Tuesday, all
> I wathed was the muppets
> and t.v. game shows and
> soap opras. But I have
> a horrible cold.
>
> May 15, 1985

Temporary physical conditions can also be used by the student to set up a stressful situation by refusing to participate in a modified activity which would accommodate the injury. David, Ross and Dennis all claimed to have bruised ankles and feet which prevented them from practising for Canada Fitness testing (May 1, 1985). However, their generally disrespectful attitude and rude remarks suggest that they are

exaggerating their problems in order to be excused completely from the activity.

Findings

Asthmatic, allergic and bronchial problems were responsible for decreased mental alertness and curtailed physical activity, at school and at home, on the weekdays and on weekends. The length of time of the diagnosis, nature and amount of the medication, and the understanding of family and friends helped determine student attitude and adaptation to these disabilities. Braces and retainers may be painful and cause stress momentarily; the conditions are generally thought to be temporary and, in the long run, beneficial. Although stress may be caused by being unable to hear well and being unable to see well while awaiting new glasses, the arrangements needed to accommodate these students are easily made. Migraine headaches and nervousness which are persistent should receive medical attention. Physical conditions of a temporary nature can indeed be stressful for the student because of the injury itself, having to be cautious, needing to restrict activity and being unable to participate as fully as one would like. Being sick at home can mean being isolated from friends and, sometimes during the day, even from family. Students with real or exaggerated injuries can also provide a stressful atmosphere in class by the manner in which they refuse to partake in modified activities.

Friends

Each student is surrounded by many potential friends in the classroom, school and community. The question of how to make friends with whom to talk, play and work is one which causes concern amongst some of these students. The difficulties of creating, maintaining and ending a relationship exist whether the sexes are the same or are opposite.

Most students view the others in class in a favorable light.

> Grant: Everybody in the class seems to be, you know, pretty easy to get along with . . . nobody builds walls around themselves.
>
> June 5, 1985

"Nice" and "friendly" were terms used to describe the students by newcomers from another school and another province.

Yet, within the room, exist inexplicable dislikes such as Marnie harbors for Grant.

> Researcher: Who are some of the kids you avoid?
>
> Marnie: Grant White.
>
> Researcher: Can you tell me why?
>
> Marnie: I don't know. I just don't like him . . .haven't since grade 1.
>
> June 12, 1985

Both Marnie and Grant are reasonable, intelligent and articulate students who do not need to resort to aggression. Yet Grant has experienced this dislike; he expresses his frustration and gives fair warning as to what he would like to do to Marnie and her friends.

> I really am upset about
> what Marnie and some
> other girls have been
> calling me like "Ooooo

> something discussing"
> and they call me "It",
> "Thing." I really try to
> not let it bother me
> but one of these times
> I will deck them good!
>
> May 7, 1985

Making friends can be an issue about which the student has many concerns and may even ask for help.

> Today I have a problem which
> I hope you have time to
> write back on. I know a
> person who I would like
> to become friends with
> but I don't think I quite
> know how to do it. I won't
> mention who this person
> is but I hope you can
> help me out.
>
> May 29, 1985

In creating a relationship, the student must make a decision as to how to approach the potential friend, directly or by taking into confidence a go-between. In addition, one can telephone, write a note or letter, or speak directly to the person. Grant is aware of his options and makes his evaluation of each.

> I think those ideas
> are great! But the phoning
> is sort of hard to do
> beleave me I've tried.
> And the telling directly
> is even harder. Above
> all I think the letter
> would be best.
>
> May 29, 1985

Determining the purpose of the intended relationship is yet another decision to be made, to "go together," or just be friends. Personal standards and those of the parents can come into play in making a choice.

Once the approach is made, knowing how to deal with the possibility of acceptance or rejection is important. Grant made his approach by "little short notes" placed in the person's desk.

Researcher: How did it work out?

Grant: Well, either the person didn't wanna answer or didn't get the note that I put in this person's desk . . . because I never got any answer . . .

Researcher: How did you feel about that?

Grant: Actually, sort of . . . glad . . . like you sorta feel as though the person's sorta giving you the cold shoulder when they don't answer or something . . . if they answer and they say, fine, they don't like you or something like that it's a little easier to take than to not have an answer.

June 5, 1985

Grant's account suggests the anxiety and uncertainty of awaiting an answer, as well as some confusion about how to feel about the whole incident.

Maintaining a relationship or relationships also can be difficult. Wendy relates her dilemma earlier in the year when she attempted to "hang onto" more than one friend at a time.

Wendy: If I hung onto one friend I'd lose another friend, and if I hung onto that one I'd lose everyone.

June 12, 1985

Attempting to play with them both at the same time in order to encourage friendship between the other two girls, she found:

Wendy: I would play with both of them and one day I tried to . . . make friends with both of them and try and see if they'd make friends. It didn't work all that great . . .

June 12, 1985

Making an appraisal as to the quality of relationship is necessary to know whether or not it should be maintained or broken. Alexandra's

lists of "What Makes a Good Friend" and "What Makes a Poor Friend" state her expectations.

What Makes a Good Friend to Me

1. A good friend to me is someone who is understanding and willing to listen to your problems and concerns (most important of all).

2. Someone who you can walk with and talk with about anything you wanted.

3. Someone like you so you can relate with them.

4. Last but not least An all above kind, generous and friendly person.

P. S. But still, to me good friends are hard to come by.

What Makes a poor friend

1. Someone who always puts everyone down.

2. Someone who you can't count on.

3. Someone who doesn't think much of themselves.

Alexandra

P. S. To me a poor friend is an enemy.

May 24, 1985

Understanding the changeable nature of people and relationships can help the student realize that change, in itself, is not necessarily threatening. Reflective, thoughtful students make the following observations.

People can exhibit different personality traits depending somewhat on the others with whom they associate.

> Marnie: She (Lori) plays with Alexandra a lot and she seems more comforted now. When she was playing with Mary Beth she was scared all the time . . . She's more confident now.
>
> June 12, 1985

Others may make mistaken judgments about people.

Michelle: When she (Alexandra) first came here, her cousin told her to beat me up and Alexandra said, "Well, she's a nice kid. I like her." Adam couldn't believe his ears 'cause . . . because we'd been in a fight and he wasn't feeling too close to me at the time . . .

June 12, 1985

People's feelings can change over time.

Michelle: Oh, me and Nancy? In the younger grades we were enemies and, like, I couldn't understand it 'cause, at the beginning of the year, it was like she hated me. And right around Christmas . . . everything became good buddies between me and her.

June 12, 1985

Breaking off or ending a relationship can be quite traumatic for it is often accompanied by an awareness of an undesirable aspect of the other person or persons. Mary Beth explains the change in her feelings towards Lori.

Mary Beth: When Lori waved her hands . . . and when she talks about Matthew a lot, that sort of bugs me, too.

Her feelings change toward Michelle.

Mary Beth: I liked her at the beginning of the year. Then . . . there was a lot of story telling and Lori got saying that, you know, Michelle . . . wasn't the greatest person in the world.

She describes herself in terms of these two girls, with whom she has previously been friends.

Mary Beth: I'm not really Lori's type of person anymore. I'm not Michelle's type of person . . .

The decision to end these relationships to her seems justified and rational. Without intending hurt to anyone, she simply states:

Mary Beth: I went on to other people.

June 12, 1985

Earlier, Tom had helped a new student, whom he had formerly known at another school, adjust to classroom and playground life at Green

Hill School. The new student, Martin, began to monopolize the attention of one of Tom's good friends, Richard. By performing an unselfish act, Tom was suddenly in danger of jeopardizing a once solid relationship with Richard.

Tom: When Richard and Martin started helping each other (they) kept on paying more attention to each other (than they did to me). Then they just . . . at recess they just go out and play by theirselves.

Researcher: How do you manage to get that into perspective so that it doesn't become a real problem to you?

Tom: Well, usually, I'll just go . . . like at recess or something . . . I'll usually just go out and play soccer with a lot of people or something. Or if they're in the classroom, I'll just sit down at my desk and do something.

June 7, 1985

Tom chose to wait out the difficult moments by getting involved in a group or an individual activity. In handling the situation in this manner, he was able to maintain rather than lose the friendship of both boys.

Findings

Students are surrounded by potential friends in their classroom, school and community. Creating, maintaining and ending relationships can be very stressful for the individuals involved. Many decisions must be made in order to approach someone—how to initiate a contact, when the appropriate moment might be, what to say and what purpose the relationship is to have. Additional factors such as the consideration of personal and parental standards can complicate the approach. Rejection can be extremely stressful and knowing how to deal successfully with it is of utmost importance. Maintaining a relationship or

friendship requires efforts which may also be stressful: "hanging on" to more than one friend at a time, making assessments as to the quality of the relationship in order to know if it should be continued and understanding change in people and in relationships. Ending relationships or outgrowing relationships can also be traumatic. Anxiety, uncertainty and confusion can accompany each portion of the life cycle of a relationship.

Family

Whereas friends are selected, families are a "given." Mother, father, siblings, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles are determined at birth. Therefore, it is not in creating a relationship but the quality of the created relationship which is of concern to students.

Fifteen of the twenty-one students live with both of their natural parents. Two boys have stepfathers, three boys live with their divorced mothers and one boy's family is in an indeterminate state. Concerns expressed here deal with racial identity, the quality of immediate family relationships, and concerns about other family members.

In his journal writing and in the one-on-one interview, but not in conversation or through regular classroom activity, John reveals extreme sensitivity to his native background. He has extremely high standards for his own personal behavior and recognizes that any criticism of his cousin might mean prejudice against his race.

> Yestoday my cosion called from
> out of town he has a mental
> problem. I'm a little bigger than

he is he likes hockey very much
he's one of my best cousions
and he's 14 he's nice.
Don't let the word get around.
O.K.

May 1, 1985

Another cousin comes to visit John's family. He recognizes that although Willie should probably not be so openly attracted to weaponry, adventure and excitement are suggested.

last night at 12:30 my cousins
came in (Willie n alice). Willie is
togh little bugger who sticks up
for his sister and plays around.
he's into army and all that
suff. sword, knife, sheild, guns.
My favorite cousins alice gets what she
want's and all that makes friends
gets nice things. (lucky)

May 22, 1985

John recognizes, too, the implication that materialism brings friendships. Although he is attracted to the idea of Alice's success, his own personal value system does not necessarily support the manner in which she achieves her success. John is experiencing a conflict in value systems between that of his family with its particular racial background and that of society as a whole; this troubles him.

Immediate family relationships can have concerns inherent in them; John's mother, for vocational reasons, had to spend two months away from her sons.

My mom was away
at Carmen learning to
be a secretary and is coming in
To night she was away for
Two months she stoped in
now and Then. She's coming
in tonight to stay.

May 6, 1985

Although the separation for a short time was necessary, John's delight

with her impending return suggests that it was not easy on the family.

Mark has a very close relationship with his sister and worries about her when she is away sailing.

Researcher: What kinds of things went through your mind about Barbara when she was away?

Mark: Sharks. Ah, boats, I don't know, other boats. Tidal waves. Huge waves. Heavy rains. That's sort of it.

June 5, 1985

Mark's relationship with his brother, on the other hand, concerns him for other reasons.

Mark: My brother! Oh, oh! Ah, my brother is kind of a mean person to me, like, he kind of likes heavy metal and we don't like heavy metal as loud as he likes it. He kind of likes to play heavy metal loud, very loud, and it really bugs me.

Researcher: Does this cause problems for you?

Mark: Well, usually, if he starts playing heavy metal and stuff, I'll just go outside and do something.

June 5, 1985

Although his brother offends Mark's musical taste and intrudes on his private space, he knows how to handle this.

Mark is an extremely sociable person. He is the youngest member of a family which is involved in many different activities. At times, he is alone.

> last night all I did was bike around and also on the play ground and watched a baseball game.

May 9, 1985

In order to combat loneliness, Mark has managed to become a good friend to himself.

Michelle experiences some conflict in feelings towards her mother.

At times her mother is impatient and at other times her mother is totally understanding of her needs.

Researcher: How would you describe your relationship with your mom?

Michelle: Not very good. We don't get along that well. She doesn't have enough patience for someone, I guess you could say, a pre-teen.

June 12, 1985

Yet, in her journal account, she writes:

> . . . he's "really a nice, goodlooking kid" my mom said. then she said "Well you love birds go down stairs, i'm sure you have better things to do than to talk to me!" then she started laughing, my mom is diffrent but great.

May 29, 1985

Conflicting views of her grandmother also are evident in Michelle's journal.

> then gram came out and gave me a lecture about how I'm not suposed toascosiate with the lower class (you 'no all that junk about getting pregnant 'n' all) (my gramma's a pervert but she says she over pertective and I say she's perverted and she jist goes on with her buisness.) Well you 'no gramma's in a way you love them -n- in a way u don't.

May 7, 1985

It is for her father that Michelle expresses her deep affection.

Researcher: How about your relationship with your dad? How would you describe that?

Michelle: Excellent. We're best friends. We do everything together. Usually it's between mother and daughter that you're best friends but, I guess, my dad has

> more patience than my mom so I get along better with my dad . . . You know, for my birthday, he did something he hasn't done for something like fifteen years . . . bought me a birthday card . . . the only time he has ever gone out to buy someone a birthday card just specially by himself . . . nobody else . . . for fifteen years . . . he hasn't done that (for) fifteen years.
>
> June 12, 1985

Beyond her immediate family, Wendy demonstrates an extremely compassionate feeling for her cousin, Shauna, and her Uncle Wilfred. Shauna's mother marries her second husband without consulting her own daughter about it.

> her Parants are always working and rarely have time for her so we try and help her. For insants her mom and my uncle Sandy (went) to Miami and disided to get married they did not even take Shauna or at least tell her that while they were in Miami they were going to get married they just bought her a doll and thought that she would understand but she did not understand nor did my mom when Shauna told her she could not belive her ears I feel really sorry for Shauna.
>
> May 7, 1985

Wendy's sense of morality is offended. She feels her aunt should have, at least, informed Shauna that her remarriage was a possibility.

In addition, Shauna's natural father is incapacitated with cancer. Again, Wendy wonders why he should have it for he is such a clean living man.

> Her dad has cancer it hurts to see him because he can't walk and he's in the hospital half of the day. My dad can't help him but he sure would try and he can't help but be sorry

> for him because he was the good guy
> in school he never toke drugs or smoked
> why did it happen to him. he's still uncle
> wilfred on the inside but not on the
> outside he can't bounce (us) on his knee
> he can barely gets to see his kids
> and us. I hope that they Find a cure
> for cancer Soon because I want uncle
> wilfred to feel good again.
>
> May 14, 1985

Wendy has an expanded view of how this family has been affected by divorce, remarriage and a debilitating disease. She is genuinely concerned about all of the family members and is struggling to make sense as to why it all happened.

Findings

Most of these students live with two of their natural parents. Families are a "given"; therefore, it is the quality of the relationship that is important to the students. Stress can result from being of a minority racial background if criticism of family members is anticipated or if conflicts in value systems are apparent. Stress can result from separation of immediate family members, be it for vocational purposes over the period of a few months, or vacational purposes over a period of a few days. Dealing successfully with loneliness helps combat anxiety of even a short separation from other family members. Conflicting feelings towards family members are not unusual but can also be stressful if they are seen as interfering forces. One student demonstrated much compassion for a cousin and uncle whose lives were severely affected by divorce, remarriage and a debilitating disease.

Expectations

Expectations are discussed in terms of the curriculum programs involving communication: that is, writing, speaking and communicating through the visual arts. Communication, as such, is subject to study and evaluation; form as well as content is considered. Because of these expectations, this formalized communication differs from the less formalized communication which is discussed in the next section.

For some children there is a natural or comfortable means of communicating or expressing themselves. Writing, for some, offers a means whereby thoughts can be sifted out and recorded in some sort of order so that they make sense to themselves and to others. The journal writing, required from all students, was comfortable and meaningful for Michelle. She experiences a sense of accomplishment.

> I like
> writing it puts words
> in to letters and what you
> really want to say comes
> out better when you write
> it.
>
> May 8, 1985

If what is written elicits a response, that is, someone reads it, attempts to understand it, and replies to it, there is a possibility of greater satisfaction with the exercise. Wendy requested that the exercise be continued:

> I wish we could
> keep journal writing on till
> the end of the year.
>
> May 30, 1985

David, on the other hand, found the exercise meaningless:

> I don't like this Idea of
> Journal writing because its a
> waist of time.
>
> May 15, 1985

For David, and some other students, communication of thoughts and ideas through writing is accompanied by many problems.

The problems of writing are many and varied. Grant, usually a very articulate student who has little trouble writing, has difficulty on one occasion forming any ideas for a creative writing project.

> Grant: "Mr. Brown, I'm having trouble trying to write. This is the first time this year I'm having trouble."
>
> May 2, 1985

Grant is referring to the fact that he does not have an idea for his story. Yet, on another occasion, Grant is a great help to David in stimulating some story ideas.

> Mr. Brown had been trying to stimulate David's imagination for story writing.
>
> Grant: "OK, David, I've got a story setting for you."
>
> Mr. Brown: "David, I can see you've got some ideas. I can see that twinkle in your eye. So, go for it. Write them down."
>
> May 15, 1985

As writing is not a comfortable mode of expression for David, he hesitates to commit his ideas to paper.

> David still has difficulty getting material down. Mr. Brown offers to let him talk out his story and tape it. He encourages Grant and David to work together but tells them that the writing is important, too. David is all fired up to work with Grant.
>
> May 15, 1985

In an effort to arrive at a finished written product, David is encouraged to first express the good ideas that he has through speech, a much more comfortable medium for him. The tape recorder will capture those ideas in a permanent, accessible form; the tape will act as the intermediate step in translating the story from speech to

the written word.

Writing, also, requires a certain number of tools: paper, pencil or pen and eraser, at very least. These necessities can serve to divert attention from the work itself.

> David is writing his assignment on loose paper. This is a trick he employs often . . . can't find his notebook . . . can't find a text . . . doesn't know what to do.
>
> The assignment causes him to think and he does have some good ideas as he talks across the room to Dennis. He, (however), has very little written down.
>
> May 24, 1985

Evasive tactics could include having to sharpen a pencil, take a drink of water from the fountain and go to the washroom.

Other writing concerns can be not having a working knowledge of grammar and spelling, not understanding the structure of the format requested and not being able to work within required deadlines. Michelle finds it occasionally difficult to produce a finished product in response to an imposed deadline.

> P. S. i've always
> love writing
> but not every day.
>
> May 30, 1985

For a variety of real and, perhaps, imagined reasons writing causes problems for some students. In addition, it may not be the most efficient and effective way of communicating.

Speech, to some, is expedient! It does not require extraneous equipment, is more immediate, is not so obviously subject to assessment and evaluation and usually produces an immediate response from another person. Still, to others, asking for help, answering a question, reading aloud from a text or making an oral presentation can be very

threatening. Speaking out for them is accompanied by self-consciousness and self-judgment. In a break in his interview, David had the opportunity to listen to his taped responses.

Researcher: David, how does your voice sound to you on tape?

David: It sounds different. It's a different tone.

Researcher: Is it pleasant to you?

David: No!

June 7, 1985

Both writing and speaking do not come easily to John; however, he uncomplainingly makes attempts to become involved with his work. His lack of communication skills in the classroom make it difficult for him to receive credit for what he says he knows and understands.

> John manages to be only a partial participant in the classroom discussion and conversation. He always has a text and a notebook out, and so gives the semblance of being "with it."
>
> May 13, 1985

Yet John, in the one-on-one interview, speaks with assurance. His answers are complete and complex; he is indeed a serious thinker and can communicate his thoughts and ideas well in such a setting.

Giving the student a moment to collect his thoughts can turn a potentially awkward moment into a positive one.

Mr. Brown: "Look at the question. What is the correct answer? David Little?"

David: "What?"

(A moment's pause.)

Mr. Brown: "No," (to David) "David, can you give us the correct answer?"

David does so!

May 6, 1985

Students develop individual styles of spoken responses.

> Alexandra replies "Yes" or "No" . . . and explains (elaborately). Most of the students take part in the discussion in their own way. Nancy, for example, waits for a quiet moment when her answer will be heard. Mark shouts out his answer and often gets into trouble. Richard almost never volunteers an answer, but if you prepare him for the question that is to come, he will have an answer prepared. Ross often answers, but he quickly goes off topic, or provides illustrations with his hands. David often answers . . . often inappropriately and out of order . . . and then does not respond when he has the floor.
>
> May 23, 1985

Students who are perceived as successful in these spoken responses are confident that they have the right answer, certain that they can support their initial response and wait for an appropriate time to share the complete response. Students who are perceived as less successful answer out of turn, shout out the answer, or go off topic. Both the content of the answer and the manner in which the answer is given are important.

Ross has great difficulty producing a finished product in spoken or written form. He has been in school for seven years and continually gives evidence of being frustrated by this inability. He, however, has exceptional visual acuity and spatial perception as determined on psychological tests administered on a one-on-one basis. Visual giving and receiving of information is a natural mode of communication for Ross.

Although "Viewing" is an acknowledged portion of the language arts curriculum, it is not graded as such on the student progress report which is used in this classroom. The communicative skills of reading and writing are evaluated both for achievement and effort; the receptive skill of viewing is not acknowledged in the language arts category

at all. Therefore, although Ross may be an accurate and meaningful communicator in the visual sense, he cannot receive credit for this success to the same degree and in the same way he would if he could read and write with accuracy and meaning.

> Ross answers intelligently but not articulately. He answers with gestures and with hand signals. He also often answers with illustrations; that is, he will go up to the board and draw what he cannot easily explain.
>
> May 13, 1985

This elaborate embellishment of verbal responses often makes the other students laugh; sometimes this results in class disturbances. Nevertheless, teachers and students realize that the experience can be made positive for Ross.

> Ross gives inappropriate answers for his age. Yet, Mr. Brown changes (subtley) what Ross says to the degree that Ross gets credit for his ideas.
>
> Title pages are collected for marking. Ross (is) given much credit for his title page for his information, thinking and art work.
>
> May 13, 1985

The visual mode of communication, which is both natural and comfortable for Ross, means that he likes to be surrounded by things with which he can play. The toys, felt pens and clothing which surround his desk, at times, interfere with work requested of the class.

> Grades 5 and 6 are supposed to be working on their stories. Ross continues to fool around with all kinds of things on his desk and is asked to go to the Time Out area to complete his assignment. He is filthy dirty from playing with his pencils and pens, and is asked to go clean himself off first.
>
> May 15, 1985

"Things," in and of themselves, are not necessarily a disturbance to a student or to the classroom atmosphere. Dennis, also an exceptional

artist, surrounds himself with many objects; his attention is usually focused on the discussion. Unlike Ross, Dennis responds to a question with an answer that is appropriate, although he also uses gestures to elaborate.

> 3:18 p.m. In science class Dennis answers a question (aided by) his hands as he explains why the size of a can determines how big a pile of sand is possible when poured on top of it. At the moment Dennis is playing with a piece of wire which he is bending around a felt marker. He now has a spiral which is springing back and forth; this does not deter him from enthusiastically answering the next question posed to the class.
>
> May 13, 1985

Like Ross, Dennis has difficulty writing personal observations, thoughts and ideas. Journal writing, for him, produced little meaning or satisfaction. For ten minutes a day for twenty-two days, he wrote nothing unsolicited except for the following entries.

May 13: how many feet are their in 50 metres?

May 14: yes I would like the answer.

May 15: I would like to no the answer to the question.

Other than this, he recorded approximately two hundred twenty entries of "I have nothing to say." Although expressing himself in writing at such a personal level was difficult for Dennis, expressing himself in a variety of artistic ways was not.

Dennis and Ross frequently seek each other out to work in partners on artistic endeavors.

> (The) project is to design an Oiler banner for a contest and display in the mall. Dennis and Ross work (well) together.
>
> May 7, 1985

Ross utilizes his ability with art in informal settings as well.

Ross is building a sand castle.

> He is always in the sand (and this time) gets buried up to his neck by many kids of all ages.
>
> May 8, 1985
> Noon

In this case, his creation of the sand castle wins the approval of the other students. His manner of play is delightful to the other children; his talents have made positive social contacts for him.

The visual mode of expression, with which Ross and Dennis have so much success, is anathema to others.

> Martin is totally frustrated with the art work. His hands seem too big to work with the small geometric figures. He is mumbling under his breath about the assignment to the four or so students in his vicinity.
>
> May 14, 1985

Findings

Three expressive ways of communicating in a formalized manner are discussed: writing, speaking and presenting knowledge visually. As each is a required part of the curriculum, each is subject to evaluation. Students may experience stress if the required mode of expression is difficult for them; the exercise will seem meaningless and convey to them no sense of satisfaction or accomplishment. Problems with writing may be having no ideas to write, having a reluctance to commit ideas to paper, not being able to locate the tools with which to write, and lacking the knowledge of the techniques and format required for writing. Having to work within required deadlines can also be stressful. Speaking can be accompanied by much self-consciousness and self-judgment. Speaking in class requires that both form and content be appropriate; problems result not only from incorrect responses but from responses which are incomplete, out of

turn, shouted out or off topic. Receiving credit for information known is troublesome if neither writing nor speaking is easy for the student. The ability to communicate information through the visual mode is not credited in a formal way as is the ability to read or write; less formal means of praise, acknowledgement and encouragement are used. Some visually oriented students surround themselves with objects; these can be distractions to the students and to the class. Some students have no problems with any of the three expressive ways of communicating information expected in school; others may have problems with all three.

Communication

As well as being required to communicate in a highly formalized way according to curriculum specifications, students communicate naturally in a less formal way with little consciousness of form but more consciousness of content and effect on the listener. Communication, in this sense, can be considered to be natural, informal or casual and can take the form of conversations, written words, illustrations and gestures. These forms of communication can have very positive results but can also have some negative effects on the playground and in the classroom. Informal, natural or casual communication has its appropriate time and place; inappropriateness can cause problems and concerns. Many interpersonal skills are involved in interpreting communication; however, misinterpretations can be troublesome and cause problems.

For Mary Beth and Elizabeth, conversation is both a relaxing and energizing exercise with its own positive rewards.

> p.s. Yesterday I was so tired I didn't feel like doing any math! I just felt weak and tired, So Elizabeth and I just relaxed and talked a bit.
>
> May 1, 1985

However, at inappropriate times, their habit of conversing in class is not helpful in accomplishing their work.

> Elizabeth and Mary Beth (are) supposed to be getting down to spelling. They are socializing as they make some little motion to get down to work. Elizabeth and Mary Beth are warned that, if they do not get down to work, their desks will have to (be) moved away from each other. They continue to talk as they slowly, slowly get some books out.
>
> May 13, 1985

For the group, as well as the individuals within that group, the opportunity to speak freely and frequently is welcomed.

> General repartee with change of teachers.
>
> May 2, 1985

Such breaks between subjects and teachers, however momentary, serve to ease the tension with witty conversation and good humour. However, carried to the extreme, humour and wittiness can be disruptive of the learning atmosphere.

> (The) class has a lot to say and (the students) answer spontaneously with humour verging on silliness.
>
> Mr. Brown: "Maybe we should stop right now and have 5 minutes of silence. Personally, I would prefer to continue the discussion."
>
> (The) class is quiet, momentarily, and the discussion resumes.
>
> May 23, 1985

Two-way communication which is ongoing can be disrupted also if one person is unresponsive. Geoff is quite adamant about wanting a reply in his journal when he discovers that he did not receive one earlier.

> . . . go to the
> thirteenth page in the
> journal and write
> something there.
>
> May 31, 1985

In a satisfying two-way relationship, each person is expected to be actively supportive of the communication.

At times, an illustration may serve to support or to deny a verbal statement. Martin, a newcomer, was very conscious about having to make a good impression at Green Hill for he had come from another school where he'd had problems and was labelled as a behavioral concern. His written and spoken comments indicate his liking for the school. Yet, the illustration on his journal cover shows "school" as a character being brutally victimized by a bloody arrow. The conflict of stated and unstated feelings is suggestive of stress in the way Martin sees the school.

Gestures, too, can support or deny a verbal statement. As well, in and of themselves, they make powerful statements.

> Judith is answering a question in her usual enthusiastic but playful style. Alexandra looks at Michelle and gives her a non-verbal signal that (means) maybe Judy is pushing it a bit too much this time. Judith just continues.
>
> May 13, 1985

A later interview supports the interpretation of the gesture; Alexandra does not care for Judith and Judith gets on Michelle's nerves.

Judith, usually, weathers any storm. She does, however, take exception to the teasing from Martin and Geoff.

> Martin and Geoff keep talking to
> us when we're writing.
> "Ya!!!" like Martin said to me
> yesterday. "Don't sit there

write." When I was thinking
for one second!
"Ya!!!" And Geoff kept saying
that I was picking my
nose with my pencil but
I was just doing this:

(diagram of her profile with pencil beside nose)

May 14, 1985

It is more their crude suggestion than the fact they were not working which annoyed her.

One-syllable, four-letter words in printed or spoken form are extremely effective in producing an immediate reaction. Only on one occasion did someone tamper with the computer. While the room emptied for recess, the researcher left for a few minutes and returned to find the following entry printed on the screen:

fuck

May 14, 1985

The researcher response ranged from rage through to amusement; the student who wrote the word and the motive for doing so were never discovered.

David knows he can get Tom's goat by teasing him when he is particularly vulnerable; one spoken four-letter word will send Tom into a rage.

At the end of the day Tom walks over to David's desk and David calls him a "Wimp!" Tom is ready to paste David, tells him he will get it outside later—how about right now. I have to intervene.

Tom stays after school to talk. David always picks on those whom he thinks he can beat up (says Tom). Tom (is) crying out of frustration and anger and resentment.

May 7, 1985

It is partly because the two words are seldom appropriate in time and

place and partly because they are crude and abrasive that they are overwhelmingly effective communicators. Because they are so strong they evoke a range of emotions.

As well as evoking outward aggression, unkind words produce emotions ranging from hurt feelings to revenge. Normally reticient to speak of his own emotions, John writes of an incident at the annual school tea the night before.

> The Tea was alright but
> Then I came a little early and
> when you told me to go to the
> fish pond Dennis said: Get Lost we
> don't need any help! That kinda hurt
> my feelings.
>
> May 3, 1985

For John to articulate the encounter with Dennis at all, is indicative that it troubled him internally although he would not have appeared to have been hurt externally. Michelle, too, keeps her feelings inside; however, her ultimate goal is revenge.

> He says and I
> quote "Hey your fat -n- ugly"
> so I just don't say nothing
> to him . . . but
> i've got a temper (and) Martin
> doesn't realize it and one
> of these days it's going to
> explode right in his
> face that's going to be one
> day i and every body
> will never forget.
>
> May 8, 1985

An undercurrent of communication exists in the classroom which is not directly related to instruction; in the same way, an undercurrent exists on the playground which is not directly related to the activity. Students choose individual methods of response.

> David is sitting on the counter by Michelle, talking to Mark. He is getting some paper and says to Mark: "See if this hurts!" as he takes the paper, rolls it up, and taps Mark with it. It is meant to be a playful, teasing tap. Mark takes little notice and says, "Where's Grant?"
>
> David talks to Mark and Michelle. Nancy kind of listens while she begins her assignment. Matthew sits by himself by the counter by the windows and thinks.
>
> May 22, 1985

Ignoring the exchanges or being involved is one choice. The degree of involvement is another. In order to make an appropriate choice, the student must understand the complexity of the situation, be able to interpret what each exchange means, think about the consequences of each possible choice and then make a choice which is appropriate, productive in some way, and not disruptive to the rest of the classroom.

Grant's observation points out the importance of accurately interpreting the communication of others.

> Grant: Well, sometimes you know, like, some guy (is) going around and he looks, like, really down in the dumps and, like, (he says), "Oh brother, I wanta die!" and sometimes you don't know if they really mean it or are just jokin' around . . . especially like, if you've been around teenagers and stuff, they're all saying, "Oh brother! Go jump in the lake or something!" Sometimes you wonder if they actually mean that.
>
> June 5, 1985

He recognizes the complexity in the manner of speaking for what is said seems to be contradictory to what is intended. Grant must accurately assess what is meant by the comments in order to know what to do next. In the first instance, is he to treat the comment as an expression of unhappiness or should he inform the "guy's" family of his wish to die? In the second instance, is he merely expected to go somewhere else or

is he expected to actually go and jump or play in the lake? Grant's behavior depends on an accurate interpretation of what he heard; misinterpretation, in these cases, could have unfortunate results.

Findings

Informal, natural or casual communication is extremely complex. Students must become extremely adept at both communicating and interpreting information in a manner both appropriate and respectful; if this does not happen, stressful situations can result. Classroom conversation between individuals or in a group can be positive and productive but, when it is disruptive or gets out of hand, it produces negative results. A two-way relationship requires each participant to be actively supportive of the communication which supports that relationship; if not, concerns develop. Illustrations can support or deny information which is otherwise communicated; if they deny the information, a conflict is suggested which may be indicative of stress. Gestures, too, in a similar way, can support or deny information; as such, they become powerful communicators in themselves. Words, by themselves, in spoken and written form are also powerful communicators; if used inappropriately, they can evoke a wide range of emotions and provoke aggression. Complex communication is part of classroom and playground life. Various interpersonal skills are required to make accurate interpretations of these complexities. Misinterpretations can cause further stress.

Evaluation

Evaluation, in this section, deals mainly with the more formal methods of student assessment generally used in an elementary classroom. In the observation period, students prepared for and/or wrote the following: a district standardized test in reading for grade 5 and grade 6, a district standardized test in mathematics for grade 5 and grade 6, a provincial standardized test in social studies for grade 6, unit tests in mathematics in both grades, and a variety of teacher-made tests and quizzes in many other subject areas. The students were also challenged to meet or exceed national standards in Canada Fitness Tests.

Evaluation on a less formal basis took place, for example, in playing recorder which they were required to do in a small group and in reading poetry which they did as individuals. Although evaluation in a broad sense took place in other ways, such as judging the quality of a friendship, or assessing the appropriateness of a junior high school for the following year, these issues are discussed in other, equally appropriate sections. The physical effects of evaluation on students, such as nervousness and migraine headaches, are discussed in the section called A Healthy Body.

Students are frequently aware of their weaknesses in subject areas. When Mark is asked about concerns at school he makes general comments about language arts and specific comments about the music program.

Mark: Language arts is, sort of, my weak program.

Researcher: How does your worry come out in language arts?

Mark: Not getting my work done. That's what worries me.

Researcher: How about in music?

Mark: Music? Jotting down the notes, remembering the notes, remembering my fingering on the recorder and the alto and stuff . . .

June 5, 1985

As well as cataloguing her weaknesses, Elizabeth knows her subject area strengths. Experiences in the past parallel experiences in the present in her response.

Elizabeth: I always had trouble in math. Math is never my greatest subject. Spelling, I think, is good. Language arts is all right. But I think math and social are my worst 'cause I have trouble with them and I always had, like in grade 3, I had so much trouble with them I thought I was never going to pass but I didn't . . . like, I got put back and then I tried a whole bunch of grade 4 work and I . . . it didn't work so I just went back into grade 3.

June 12, 1985

To some degree this accounts for her feelings of helplessness and hopelessness in her journal account.

> Im kind of behind in
> all my subjects, and I
> don't know if and how
> Im going to begin to finish
> them.
>
> May 16, 1985

Elizabeth and her friend, Mary Beth, both identify mathematics as an area in which they have difficulty. In order to enlist help, the ability to identify specific problem areas is definitely an asset; otherwise the task of working at an entire subject is overwhelming.

> Students are asked to be specific about problems they are having (in math). Mary Beth and Elizabeth are having many problems but say only, "measuring angles." This they say . . . after Nancy (academically confident in mathematics) says, "measuring angles." (Either) they are not willing to

admit out loud they are having difficulty (or they) may find it difficult to express themselves specifically.

May 13, 1985

Mary Beth explains some of her confusion at the beginning of the year was due to not listening and also not knowing what to listen to.

Mary Beth: Well, in the beginning of the year I didn't really listen. I didn't know what to listen to. It was, like, you know, "Here's your assignment," you know, "understand it." But I couldn't work things out. And when Elizabeth came along, and she couldn't work (things) out, you know, then we started working things out (together), you know. I started to understand the math and I started listening. The more I started listening, the more I understood.

June 12, 1985

As Mary Beth begins to work together with a friend and to take some responsibility for her involvement in mathematics, she begins to understand it better and has a sense of accomplishment.

David, on the other hand, does not take sufficient responsibility for his learning in mathematics. Awareness of cause and effect, between working hard and being able to understand and do his mathematics is not evident. The "hard part" still remains confusing. Rather than trying to work at it, he gets upset.

Researcher: Tell me your feelings about math.

David: Sometimes it's hard and sometimes it's easy. When it's hard it gets me confused and (I) start getting upset . . . stuff like that.

June 7, 1985

David's limited involvement results in bitterness.

I did not study.

I am not cot up and it sucks.

May 14, 1985

The danger of developing a self-defeating attitude is that negative

results are perpetuated. The student who feels no responsibility or control senses that, no matter what he does, the marks will not change; low results are expected.

> Mark came in next and had his (test) corrected. Although he had done quite well on his review sheet, his test did not even net him a 50%—unbelievably low. This did not distress him too much. He, in fact, expected that this would be a low mark.
>
> He quickly completes assignments because he, under no circumstances, wishes to have homework. He pretends that the test results are not important . . . as if, in this case, he has no control over what happens.
>
> May 16, 1985

At times, the defeatist attitude can be "catchy." The students are outside running the 50 metre dash and the endurance run for the Canada Fitness tests.

> Alexandra: "I can't run."
> Lori: "Neither can I."
> Wendy: "Neither can I."
>
> May 15, 1985

Although Alexandra has severe bronchial problems which prevent her from running at all and Lori has asthmatic problems which require her to monitor strenuous physical activity, Wendy has no known physical problems which would restrict her performance.

Unlike the informal testing situation, the formal test inspires reverence, respect and awe. The room is hushed.

> Tests appear to be the great leveller. All is quiet as the two grades perform their tests on Unit 9 geometry.
>
> May 14, 1985

Test results are frequently given in percent scores, percentile scores, or marks out of 10 or out of 30; students must make sense as to what the scores mean to them as an individual and to them as a member of a

larger group.

Communication of results can have troubling effects either for students who would like to have done better or who, on the other hand, do not wish to publicize an exceptional result.

> Spelling quiz scores, out of 10, are asked for out loud.
> Lori says, "7 out of 10."
> Someone echoes very softly, "7 out of 10," slightly mocking her answer.
> Ross, on the third request, gives an answer: "5 out of 10."
>
> May 7, 1985

> Matthew tells me (privately) just before the beginning of recess that he received the award of Excellence last year.
>
> May 1, 1985

In order to reduce the troubling effects of publicizing a mark, students are occasionally asked to choose between reading it out loud or delivering it to the teacher's desk.

> Mr. Brown: "If you don't want to mention it to the class, just come on up."
> Judith goes up.
> Matthew gives his mark.
> Elizabeth says 18.5
> Andrew says 21.
> Mark says his is 20/30.
>
> May 7, 1985

In this instance, students make a choice, their dignity is maintained, no reasons are asked regarding the quality of their test performance and no excuses are given.

Misinterpretation of test results can cause concern. Tom, voluntarily, wrote a district sponsored, nationally administered mathematics test for academically talented students.

> Researcher: You did really well on the math test you took earlier this year and you weren't totally pleased with your results. Can you talk about that?

Tom: Well, I just got over the 50 percentile mark and I never sort of realized that I got so good. I thought that . . . usually when it's under 70, it's not too well . . . done.

June 7, 1985

His journal records this reaction.

I feel that I screwed (up) totally.

May 29, 1985

Had Tom not been an exceptional student in mathematics, he never would have been invited to take part in the test; yet, for weeks, his interpretation of the test result meant that he saw himself as a failure.

Performing for an evaluation as an individual in the presence of one's peers, can cause nervousness for some students.

Lori will read. She reads a short poem—gets 6½. She giggles as she goes back to her desk.

Nancy reads next and gets 7 . . . so does Matthew.

Michelle has tried to memorize the poem, Love. She starts twice and can't get through it so she obtains the script. She gets 6½.

Martin reads. His book falls on the floor. Mr. Brown asks him to begin again. He does so and begins a little more quietly the second time round. Martin gets 6/10.

Marnie has memorized Hat by Shel Silverstein and gets 7½. She says to Judith: "Don't look at me that way."

May 29, 1985

Giggling, forgetting the words, dropping the book and reading quietly are signs of nervousness; even Marnie, who is more successful with memory work and with the quality of her presentation, makes a self-conscious remark to Judith as she returns to her desk.

Performing on an individual basis, even if not for obvious evaluation, can produce self-consciousness. Students attempt evasive

behavior.

> Mr. Brown: "Geoff, would you read your story, please!"
> Geoff: "I don't want to read my story."
>
> Mr. Brown: "Next person will be Ross!"
> Ross: "I don't want to read it."
>
> Mr. Brown: "Marnie, will you read your story?"
> Marnie: "Can I just hand it to you and you read it?"
>
> May 6, 1985

Performing for an evaluation as a group member can prove embarrassing.

> Michelle, Nancy and Judith played a familiar piece which they had played many times before . . . They made hesitant beginnings three or four times . . . The parts didn't fit together as well as before: Michelle played shakily, and Judith kept stopping in order to start again.
>
> Wendy and Marnie didn't make it through (their recorder pieces the first time) either. Wendy exhibits a pale color when she is embarrassed and her face is rigid.
>
> May 24, 1985

Regardless of past performances on tests, quizzes, homework assignments or daily lessons, the final report card is of great importance. Excitement, anticipation and anxiety register in Mary Beth's request in her journal.

> Do you think since I'm leaving on the 1st of June for Holland could I have my report card before I go? I'm anxious to see my marks before I leave. In grade 3 I went away for 1 month and they didn't give me it until I got back! I didn't know if I passed or not.
>
> May 8, 1985

Knowing "if I passed or not" is crucial. Grant, too, is somewhat concerned about getting a low mark in a subject area and the possibility of having to repeat grade 5.

Researcher: Do you have any concerns that you would say are based around school?

Grant: Not really, no. Not unless I'm going to get an F. You know, in some subjects, but other than that, no.

Later, in the interview.

Researcher: It doesn't sound like you're really concerned right now about it.

Grant: Well, yeah, I am about this because it could mean, you know, staying in grade 5 another year.

June 5, 1985

Grant indicates how his present marks might affect his future success in junior high and university.

Grant: I want to go on to, like, university and stuff, too, and learn quite a few things. And if I get bad marks in school on my report cards and stuff, you always have a copy of that, and, you know, lots of times that can be reviewed.

If you get poor marks in, like, in junior high . . . they sometimes look at your elementary (marks). If . . . you had really good marks and . . . all of a sudden you're doing really bad in junior high, they wonder what's happened to you.

June 5, 1985

Findings

Evaluation, in this section, included both formal testing and less formal methods of assessment. Student performance is evaluated almost all of the time from impromptu performances which are public in nature to performances on highly-regulated standardized tests. Student performance is assessed on an individual progress level, a classroom level, district level, provincial level and national level. Students experience stress over evaluation in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Students can have problems with weaknesses in

certain subject areas. These problems may be general or highly specific. Past experiences can parallel present experiences in areas of need. Helplessness and hopelessness can result from not knowing how or when to get the expected work load accomplished. Confusion can result from not knowing how to listen or what to listen to and from not being able to conquer the "hard" parts. Not taking responsibility for the problem produces a poor attitude; a poor attitude does nothing to improve the quality of the performance. A self-defeating attitude can be dangerous in that negative results are perpetuated; a self-defeating attitude can also affect others. Evaluation results and test scores are recorded in many ways; trying to make sense as to what they all mean to the student can, in itself, cause concern. Having to reveal marks in class can be stressful; having results which are low or results that are high can be embarrassing. Both communication and misinterpretation of marks can be sources of problems. Students express concerns about getting low marks in a subject area or having to repeat a grade. There is an awareness that present performance in elementary school can affect future success in junior high school and in university.

Responsibility

Students have responsibilities at home and at school. Home responsibilities have to do with helping people or performing duties or contributing to the family business. School responsibilities include leadership responsibilities in a Family Time program and serving at an annual tea.

Elizabeth, during the spring time, had been quite concerned about

her mother who had to undergo a serious operation.

> Elizabeth: Well, she was (in the hospital) for a few days, I guess. When she came home, she was really tired. She stayed away for about a month and a half from work. She's back at work but still gets tired fast, like, when she comes home she falls asleep at almost 6:30 'cause it gets so tiring.
>
> June 12, 1985

Then, she and her older brother shared the responsibilities of cooking and cleaning.

> Elizabeth: . . . my brother, he usually made supper because I always burn it. But, ah, I usually just cleaned the house and took care of the cat and just made the beds in the morning.
>
> June 12, 1985

Now, she continues to help out when needed.

> I've had to make
> supper for a few
> nights now because
> my mom had some
> meetings to tend
> to at one of the schools.
> She teaches at three
> schools and had some
> meetings at one I
> think.
>
> May 9, 1985

Although Elizabeth does not mind actually performing the necessary chores, there is an element of loneliness about having to do them because her mother is not able to be with her.

John has responsibility for two younger brothers whom he has to keep out of trouble (June 7, 1985). In addition, he speaks of having to clean the house when it's dirty and put his brothers to bed on time. He is chiefly concerned when they don't listen to him.

Getting oneself out of bed and on the way to school all or part of the time is not an unusual responsibility. Wendy writes:

Today started off bad my alarm went off
but it was on soft so I didn't hear it till 8:15 then
I had to get dressed get something to eat . . .

May 8, 1985

Cooperation with siblings is often required. Wendy shared a piece of toast with her sister when they got up late; babysitting with a brother proved both exciting and challenging to Mary Beth.

On Saturday
night Robert (my brother) and I babysat
2 kids from 6:00pm-1:30 am! What a hassle!
The getting the kids to bed part was hard.
Rob and I got $8.00 each. Not bad! . . .
Sunday I was a grump!
So was my brother. Boy! did we
ever get at each other's throats.

May 6, 1985

In addition to having to cooperate with Rob, putting the kids to bed, working long hours and staying up late all took their toll on Mary Beth. However, earning the money and having completed a job successfully seem apt rewards.

Wendy helped her family move a business into a new location.

On Friday at 6:00 we went to my
dad's new shop. it needed lots of work on it . . .
we worked on Friday from 6:00 pm to 12:00 am
and Saturday . . . we worked from 9:00 am to
6:00 pm (and) from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm and then
Sunday . . . we worked from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm
. . . today right after school
we are going to work because
my dad needs lots of help.

May 27, 1985

Not only the move but the setting up of the business itself was of great interest and importance to Wendy.

Wendy: . . . see my dad talks confidentially to my mom about this stuff so me and my sister don't get a lot of information out of it, like, I didn't know this until yesterday. My dad had lost a business thing. He had a business deal and all of a sudden it had been . . .

> the people said, "Sorry, we have given the business to somebody else." And my dad says, "Oh, OK!" and he had to get somebody else in and all kinds of neat stuff. It's really interesting.
>
> June 12, 1985

Wendy feels responsible and needed; her help in cleaning and setting up of the business equipment was welcomed and proved meaningful for her. Although the success of the business was of concern, Wendy felt she could make a worthwhile contribution which has an immediate impact on the welfare of everyone in her family.

Almost all of the students in Room 2 have the opportunity to be a leader in Family Time. Student leaders have responsibility for six or seven children from kindergarten to grade 5. Run on a once-a-week basis, this program is designed to foster cooperation, understanding, caring and responsibility for each other; leaders are expected to foster these qualities in their family members, to lead their groups in discussion or activity sessions, to model behavior and to take the initiative in helping out with playground problems. Students share some concerns.

David has been a leader previously and compares the two groups he has had.

> David: I've got a worse group than I had before because this group that I have now is always wandering around, yelling, talking and drawing on everything.
>
> June 7, 1985

Unlike David, John had not been a leader before, and found it worked out "pretty good." However, he had some concerns about behavior that was inappropriate at the time; his family members were talking during a ballet performance.

John: I had seven people in my family counting me . . . eight people counting the kindergarten (student). I had them all with me one time . . . (at) . . . Coppelia, and it was a bit hard because Joe and Nicholas and Danny were talking. I told them to be quiet and some other girls were talking. It was sort of hard.

June 7, 1985

Maintaining control of many younger students was a challenge both to David, in his general manner of expressing concern, and to John, in his specific manner of expressing concern.

Elizabeth describes the composition of her family group.

Elizabeth: Ah, some of the kids are pretty good, like, some of them are too silent and some are too noisy but most times (they) are pretty good and some of them don't want to participate and things, but they usually do (in the end).

June 12, 1985

She has a method for dealing with nonparticipants without asking for direct and immediate adult intervention.

Researcher: What happens when they don't (participate)?

Elizabeth: When they don't? Um, they usually, they don't really want to; they'll usually make a fuss or something and then I'll just say, "Fine." Then, after a while, they'll just see that everybody's having fun and they'll usually join in.

June 12, 1985

Being able to handle these problems by herself helped Elizabeth feel in control.

Students may request help from a teacher leader but seldom do so unless they require adult intervention or advice. Mary Beth will not be in attendance until the end of the school year, so she identifies a problem within her group.

Do you know
who could take my place as

> leader for that because Trina (my asistant) doesn't want to look after Wesley; and he's a problem because he wanders off from the group! He needs watching and sometimes Rebecca Walker does too! Could we work something out about this? Thanks!
>
> May 30, 1985

Mary Beth asks for help only when the solution to her problem involves choosing another leader, which is a decision beyond her own responsibilities.

Understanding the specific requirements of a role helps the student leader feel competent and confident. For many weeks, Martin, a relative newcomer, felt ill at ease in his assistant leader capacity. Then, one day, he seemed to understand what was required of him.

> Today Martin is a real help with helping others finish their badge designs. He, himself, is finished and sits next to the other children in the family—evidence that this is the first recorded time he has not done so much aimless wandering around.
>
> May 30, 1985

Repetition of roles from one year to the next, as well as from one week to the next, can also help dispel doubts as to how to carry out responsibilities.

> A word about the day. This is the day of the annual spring tea and education week open house and display. Students in this room have traditionally served the tea and dessert and taken responsibilities for the fish pond and plant and bake sales. There does not seem to be an unusual amount of worry or concern about this—perhaps because most of these children know the procedure for the evening.
>
> May 2, 1985

A student Family Time leader has well defined responsibilities which are carried out in organized activity or discussion sessions. The time and place are specific and leadership behavior takes place

under the guidance of teacher leaders.

Findings

Responsibilities are extremely important to the students, whether they originate at home or at school. Responsibilities challenge the students to perform adult-like duties such as cooking and cleaning, taking care of young people, or helping to establish a family business. Stress, however, can accompany these responsibilities: worrying about mother's health, having to work cooperatively with a brother or sister, or having to work alone. Stress results, too, from not being able to carry out responsibilities as is expected or from having to spend long, hard hours in order to carry them out successfully. Stress can result, too, from having responsibility for other students who do not listen and participate as they should. Problems are apparent when responsible roles are either not well defined or not well understood.

Self-Control

Schools expect students to become responsible, independent individuals who care for themselves as well as others in socially acceptable ways. Unlike structured leadership, the responsibilities are not so well defined and are not carried out in organized sessions. Responsibility for oneself must occur all the time in all places; adult intervention may not be available. Responsibility for oneself is discussed here as having control of property, time and actions.

Desks and cubby holes are assigned to individual students. These spaces and whatever goes in, on, under or around them become the property and the responsibility of the assignee.

> Marnie's desk is always interesting with all manner of things hanging from, stored under, and stuffed into her desk.
>
> May 29, 1985

Individual tastes are evident.

> Dennis' desk is always cluttered with materials. He is constantly playing with something or drawing. He insists his desk is organized even at the end of the day when all are requested to remove materials from desktops. He seems to need his materials all around him. In contrast to this, Martin's desk is always clean, as though he cannot operate with any excess clutter. He is always in danger of throwing away something of value.
>
> May 10, 1985

Personal storage space is very limited. Problems can occur in trying to keep materials organized and available.

> The floor is littered with recorders, texts, games, binders, papers, extra shoes as there is not an overly great amount of space for all this.
>
> May 6, 1985

Some students extend their personal space by hanging bags or knapsacks on their desks. Portability, then, is also increased. Care and control of personal property can be a problem to some.

> Ross leaves his jacket outside and (then) looks for it in the Lost and Found box. (In the meantime, I had brought it in.)
>
> May 8, 1985
> Noon

Just as space is restricted within the classroom, so time is restricted within a school year. For ten months of the year, five days of the week, and fourteen hundred sixty minutes of instruction per week time is to be well used. Dennis' homework book and Mary Beth's notebook of assignments help them to organize time.

The organization of time in the classroom is necessary for efficiency and effectiveness of instruction. Students are expected

to begin their work, complete their work or change to another subject area when it is expedient for instructional purposes.

> This is interesting . . . the fact that it always seems to take the class some time to settle to tasks and when they are deeply involved, it's morning recess and time to put things away.
>
> May 23, 1985

At times, changes in this schedule or timetable appear to be partly responsible for atypical behavior. On Thursday, May 9, the students had new responsibilities as leaders in Family Time, the Family Time schedule had been altered, and they were planning to attend the Harrow Junior High orientation program in the afternoon.

> Students are really hyperactive. Perhaps this could be because of all the changes in the day.
>
> May 9, 1985

Group movement between classes is expected to be quiet and orderly.

> The class is asked to be ready and form a nice, straight line.
>
> Mr. Brown: "OK, count of three, or we sit down and try this over again."
>
> This works for a moment; then, talking and noise as they move down the hall.
>
> May 21, 1985

Staying in at recess time, coming in early or staying after school are ways to extend the work time. However, staying after hours may not be desirable.

> Michelle and Judith, when they came into the room this morning, immediately asked if they could go with me to the mall to deliver the banner. When I said that was possible either at noon (hour) or (after school) this afternoon, they both had reasons as to why they could not go either time.
>
> May 13, 1985

Missing class time is one consideration; missing free time is quite another. Mary Beth makes a plea for some in-school unassigned time.

> Yesterday after school, we're
> sorry Elizabeth and I couldn't stay . . .
> Elizabeth and I were wondering if for maybe
> 2 days have Catch up
> time in Math. We're <u>really</u> behind. Thanks!
>
> May 1, 1985

Deadlines, too, are requirements placed on students in order to evaluate completed projects.

> The announcement is that the stories assigned yesterday, which amount to about a page in length, are due tomorrow morning. General awe and noise which accompanies disappointment or disbelief or disapproval.
>
> May 23, 1985

Having homework, which cuts into free time, can also be a source of irritation; far more important concerns intervene for John.

> I'm boss of the wardens . . .
> Now we get three other members
> We're going on a camp out this
> Saturday and Sunday. I might not
> get my homework done.
>
> P.S.
> I like Junior Forest Rangers
>
> May 27, 1985

John is primarily concerned with being a responsible leader in an organization that has many social benefits for him; he is secondarily concerned with his mathematics.

Time is expected to be used "profitably"; a quality finished product is the desirable end result. Problems occur when this does not happen.

> David continues to do nothing but sit and stare.
> He now moves out of his desk to examine what Dennis
> is working at.
>
> May 30, 1985

Not only does David not complete his work but, if his presence is a disruption to Dennis, he prevents Dennis from completing his work as

well. Quality time, as well as a quality finished product, may be the ideal. However, staying on task for a full day can be a challenge.

> At the end of the day, it is a little more difficult for students to listen to lessons. Restlessness is evident by moving around in the desk (Geoff), off task behavior (Martin), and cutting creative figures out of paper (Wendy).
>
> May 10, 1985

The end of the day may have less structured material, too. This allows for free flow of movement and ideas.

> The afternoon is warming up as the day wears on. (The) lesson has progressed from a structured discussion to reading (and) writing outlines in a partner situation which is less structured in terms of direct teacher intervention.
>
> May 13, 1985

The end of the day and the end of the week can be very tiring. Friday, May 24, was also rainy so that the students did not get their normal recess break.

> One student directs a question at me, "No recess?"
> Someone else says, "Boring!"
> "Don't we get out at 3:15?" which would, in fact have been ten minutes before the expected dismissal time.
>
> May 24, 1985

The afternoon seemed long for everyone.

Students are required to make judgments as to how to best accomplish a task in a given amount of time. Both structured and creative assignments are given:

> Mr. Brown: "What I would have you do now is work on one of two things quietly: language arts, spelling. If you have finished those, you have time to work quietly on the City Transit project we started yesterday."
>
> May 30, 1985

Many of the projects were group designed. Therefore, the student must organize group and individuals plans for a structured and then a

creative task. Decisions must be made to work independently, with a partner or in a small group. Materials must be assembled; work must be begun in order to use time wisely and accomplish a satisfactory finished product. At any point, problems can develop to interfere with this process.

Control of one's own behavior is encouraged and expected in school. In order to have friends, John actively sought to be included in many informal groups.

> John seems to be happier these days because he is getting his work done. He is making good relationships, as well.
>
> May 24, 1985

This success helps get him out of potentially awkward situations; thus he makes overtures to others to help him.

> John has a dictionary and is looking at the word, "cancer." He stumbles over the word, "malignant," hands the book to Andrew, and Andrew reads the definition out loud.
>
> May 24, 1985

John is taking control of his own problems and is taking action to solve them.

Making friends is John's way of avoiding potential problems; for Geoff, distancing oneself from a friend is another.

> Geoff and Martin have managed to get their desks just as close together as possible. Nonverbal, as well as quiet verbal, communication is then possible.
>
> May 2, 1985

> Geoff's desk has been shifted away from Martin's. Last week Geoff and Martin spent a lot of time talking and collaborating.
>
> May 6, 1985

> Geoff said at noon he did not wish to sit next to Martin because Martin copied his work.
>
> May 7, 1985

Geoff accomplished his goal in an extremely diplomatic way without being a problem to anyone.

Tom's conflict with David has been a source of constant stress to him. In order to deal with the problem himself Tom hones his own social problem solving skills. He identifies the problem.

> It started at the beginning of grade 5 when I was first around him and my sister was out there and she . . . I think David was (blaming) her for something that someone else did and he started pushing her around. I went over and tried to break it up and then he tried to trip me and I just sat there trying to get away from him.

He understands his own dimension of the problem.

> Before I was kinda a little bit afraid of him and then it got to a point I was so mad I couldn't . . . I didn't care what I did to him.

He understands David's dimension of the problem.

> If I get mad or anything, he knows that he's getting to me so he just keeps trying and trying and trying, so I guess . . . (I) give him a funny little shrug and then walk away.

Tom, then, makes a decision based on what he knows.

> Now I just mainly ignore him.

He evaluates that decision.

> Ummmm. I hardly ever blow my top now. Usually, I don't like blowing my top 'cause usually now or after I have a big headache that won't go away.

June 7, 1985

Tom has learned social skills which operate independently of adult help; his success has made him much happier than before.

Being totally responsible for behavior and actions frees a student to work independently and with relaxed supervision.

> Wendy is working on a filmstrip viewer at the side of the room. She is an extremely diligent student, is fiercely independent, and accomplishes a lot on her own.

May 23, 1985

Less responsible students are faced with stricter supervision; irresponsible students are faced with detentions and suspensions.

> Mark was brought up to the desk and shown that the next step in the detention process was a half-day suspension. I pointed out that this would be served the last half-day of the month—the swimming afternoon tomorrow. I asked him if this is what he wanted. He said, "No."
>
> May 30, 1985

To his credit, Mark took immediate responsibility for his actions and avoided the half-day suspension.

David has been suspended more than any other student in class. His first comment reveals that he does not take total responsibility for his actions; therefore, David feels the consequences are justified only part of the time.

> Researcher: How do you explain the fact that you have had (more than one half-day suspension)?
>
> David: Well, it's when everybody wants to talk and that . . . it's when you want to do something else besides work. Talking, wandering around, stuff like that.
>
> Researcher: Do you feel that the teachers are justified in giving out suspensions when that happens?
>
> David: Sometimes.
>
> June 7, 1985

Findings

Responsibility for oneself is discussed in terms of having control of property, time and actions. Personal space is limited in school but the student must maintain control over all of the materials which go into that space. Stress results when materials are not organized and readily accessible. Time, too, must be dealt with responsibly to ensure that quality results are achieved. Stress can result from too

many changes in schedules. Stress can result, too, from needing additional time to finish projects, complete assignments or meet deadlines. Homework itself can be stressful. Certain periods of time can produce stress, such as the end of the day and the end of the week. On rainy days when long periods of instruction are not broken by recess, stress can result. Control over one's behavior may mean friends must be made or avoided. Social problem solving skills help the student deal with stress. A responsible student can behave more freely than less responsible students or irresponsible students who are subjected to tighter controls in the form of detentions and suspensions.

A Sense of Order

This section deals with the students' sense of order in the way they perceive the world. Individual and group rights and privileges are part of the order. Moral and ethical values are also included.

Students assimilate individual belief and behavioral systems from a wide variety of sources by the time they reach grades 5 and 6. From these individual perspectives students make assessments, evaluations and judgments in the way they view the world. From these perspectives students develop a sense of security about the present and predictability about the future.

Conflict results when what they perceive is in opposition to this order; what is actually happening is in opposition to what should be happening. Anxiety can result from a present which is insecure or a future which is unpredictable. Problems, concerns and worries can result.

Equality of opportunity is important for individuals, classes or teams. Many of the students wished to be included in a district sponsored, computer scored attitude survey which some, but not all, had done before.

> When the attitude test names were announced, some of the students responded, "Why does Marnie always get chosen to do that?" "Was this a draw?", meaning were the names picked randomly.
>
> May 8, 1985

The individuals who responded in that way felt they, too, had a contribution to make. Wendy presents the view of individual students in another class; they feel they have not had an equal opportunity to serve at the annual tea.

> . . . the other room think that
> you let us do all the
> fun stuff not there class
> I wanted to tell you . . .
>
> May 3, 1985

In team sports, each side should receive an equal opportunity to perform well.

> oh yeah the umpire was
> on their side at the baseball game
> a girl named Terror (age 9)
> had just got to home plate
> her leg had touched the plate
> because she
> slid and the ump
> called her out and
> on their team a girl
> had a strike and he called
> It a ball. he wasn't fair.
>
> May 8, 1985

Marnie feels the umpire played favorites. Tom expresses a similar view very succinctly.

> . . . the official's are blind and the other team gets' away with murder.
>
> May 1, 1985

The right to privacy of the spoken or printed word is of great importance to students.

> Michelle Fisher, Sharon Baker and Betty Ann Forchuk are having a conversation in the washroom because they cannot find privacy outside.
>
> May 1, 1985
> Noon

Asking them to leave because the washroom is not well supervised and, therefore, not appropriate for conversation is not respecting their right to privacy. Mary Beth, in her journal, glues two pages together and writes:

> This page is glued because
> I wanted to Omit something.
>
> May 29, 1985

Her right to privacy of the written word is respected.

The right of appeal is of extreme concern to Michelle, who feels that four of her friends are unjustly accused of throwing wet wads of paper towelling at the ceiling of the girls' washroom. Detentions, or "dt"s were the result.

> Right! Well today I have
> to talk to you for a really
> serious matter. I no it's not
> my business but their my
> friends and I have to tell
> you something, that happened
> yesterday. 4 people got 20 min
> dt's yesterday (and) only 1 but
> of the 4 deserved it and another
> didn't even get one for the
> same reason Betty Ann, Trina -n-
> Sharon didn't do that stuff
> on the ceiling. Danielle and Rose
> did! see what I mean? i no
> that you might think i'm
> just covering up for them but
> i'm not cause I no who
> was doing (that) and all of them
> said that they didn't and
> i can tell when Betty Ann is

lieing and she wasn't
neither was Trina or Sharon
the reason why i no that
Danielle and Rose were
doing this is cause I walked
in on them sorta (they walked
in on me) and I just stayed
in the stall till they were
gone.

May 16, 1985

Detentions are a part of a discipline system; detentions of various lengths are levied in sequential order after a pattern of warnings begun with a name on the board followed by a series of ticks.

Three people have names on the board readied for detentions on Monday: Ross, Andrew and Mark

Mark: "I never got mine ticked."

May 24, 1985

Mark's objection was that due process was not observed; his name on the board did not get "ticked" and therefore, a detention was not warranted.

The rights of equal opportunity, privacy, appeal and due process are examples used here to indicate their extreme importance in the lives of these students. The value of time and commitment to an effort, the value of human life, the value of public property, the value of tradition and the value of individuals are also held in high esteem by students.

The value of time and commitment to an effort is exemplified in Geoff's reaction on the evening of the annual tea. He had committed himself to serving tables at eight o'clock. When he arrived the tables were well served, the initial rush had subsided and it was suggested that he take it easy and wait a few moments until the shift could be easily made.

> Geoff was extremely annoyed at me because he had to leave a baseball game to come to the tea. (When he arrived, he thought my comments to him meant he was not needed at all.)
>
> May 2, 1985

Geoff, naturally, felt that the time spent waiting to resume his shift would have been better spent playing baseball.

Mary Beth's valuing of human life is evident in this journal account:

> Last night I watched "Dynasty." It's my favorite show except for the "Young and the restless." Dynasty was "gory" last night. For the wedding of Amanda and Prince Michael. These army gorrilias came in and killed everyone even the bride! There was blood everywhere! It was stupid and very disgusting ending. "Yuck!!
>
> May 15, 1985

In addition, she is outraged at the manner in which the senseless slaughter of human beings was used as an irrational conclusion to the television series for the season. Her intelligence is offended.

Respect for public property is another value which is evident. On Wednesday, May 29, a representative from City Transit provided the students with a comprehensive presentation. Initially, the tone was raucous with the representative encouraging boisterous, humorous responses in order to gain their attention. He then told them about vandalism on city buses and LRT trains.

> Students are awed with (the) $500,000 (annual) vandalism bill. Students get quiet at this point with the seriousness of the point being made. Tone quietens down.
>
> May 29, 1985

All students were taken aback by this half million dollar figure for vandalism; some looked at each other as if to say, "Who would do that senseless damage?"

Sharing of public property, at times, is essential. Green Hill School shares its facilities with a day care organization; arrangements are scheduled in order that the school and day care groups seldom share the same spot simultaneously. However, new playground equipment was installed on the previous weekend by the parents of many students. On Monday, a conflict occurred which Judith reports.

> You know, I'm really mad! . . . Because yesterday Lori and I were sitting in the sand, and the lady from the day-care came and told us to go home. She said "GO HOME!! This is the day-care's time to play on the new playground! You have no right to be on this equipment it isn't yours! Now, go home!!!
>
> May 7, 1985

At least three students reported this incident at length. As well as feeling they had priority rights to the equipment, they felt offended that their judgment, as to whether or not they should be there, was questioned; in addition, they were offended by the unduly harsh treatment they received.

Tradition is valued by the students. Matthew's question suggests that the established order of things need not be changed.

> Will we be having a baseball game between the teachers and grade sixers? Its sort of like a tradition because as far as I remember theyve had year end baseball games.
>
> May 10, 1985

Nancy supports his appeal.

> . . . every year . . . since my sister was here they would play. Last year I think

was the second time in 26 years
the sixers would win.

May 9, 1985

In a sensitive, diplomatic way both students inform a recently appointed administrator that what has been done before, in this case, is of value to them.

Andrew is asked about possible personal problems in school. Although he is a boy who perceives very few, his answer outlines a personal dilemma.

Andrew: Problems . . . um . . . well, sometimes in gym, like, five people ask me to be their partner. That's hard to decide. But I decide somehow.

The researcher response reveals only a superficial understanding.

Researcher: That's kind of a nice problem to have, isn't it?

Andrew: Sort of.

Andrew's hesitant, reflective answer indicates that what, to an adult, seemed simple was, to the student, quite complex. He is expected to value the teacher's request; in order to do so, he must take the chance of displeasing four out of five of his friends. Andrew demonstrates, by sharing this dilemma, the valuing of the feelings of all individuals who are part of his world.

Grant shares his feelings about the uncertainty of the future.

Researcher: Do you have any particular worries or concerns that you can think of?

Grant: Well, sort of, like you know, everybody is always talking about, like, war, you know like U. S. invading all these different places, right, and you know, sometimes you wonder if you're going to be around when you're thirty and stuff.

Researcher: Do you spend a lot of time worrying about it?

Grant: Not really. Just every once in a while, you know, it just crosses your mind, especially when you watch the news in the morning . . .

Researcher: How does that kind of worry affect what you do every day? in school or with your friends?

Grant: Sometimes, you know, you just want to go, forget it, we're not doing nothing. I want to have one day of relaxation, you know, if the bomb is going to drop tomorrow. Stuff like that, or, or else, you just go totally berserk, like you know, just fumbling up words, sometimes even purposely . . . because when you're a kid, you adults think, you know, you gotta be a nice little gentleman, and all this stuff and sometimes you feel like going . . . No, I want to be crazy today . . . go berserk on people.

June 5, 1985

The thought of war and possible annihilation are the basis of Grant's concern. Although he says he doesn't spend a lot of time worrying about it, he does watch the news in the morning. Grant is confused about what to do, and what to say. He respects the expectations of adults yet, in the face of an unpredictable future, is unsure about what to do as a child.

Findings

The students' sense of morals, ethics and values are discussed as they perceive them. Concerns stem from perceptions which are "out of order" with their beliefs and behaviors. Stress results when such conditions persist over long periods of time without abatement. Areas in which students feel there should be "orderliness" are as follows. Equality of opportunity as individuals, as members of a class and as players on a team is important to them. Privacy of the spoken or written word is regarded as essential. The rights of appeal and due process are also of importance. Students value time and commitment to

an effort. Human lives, generally, and individual feelings, specifically, are highly valued. Respect for the care and sharing of public property is evident, as is the valuing of tradition. Stress can result from being uncertain about the future.

Sexual Identity

The students in this study range in age from ten to thirteen, representing a wide range of physical growth and emotional maturity. This does not imply that the younger members of the class are less developed physically and less mature emotionally nor is the reverse true. Nevertheless, at age ten, the potential for growth over a three-year span is great. Therefore, some students demonstrate obvious signs of being well aware of their developing sexual identities, others do not.

Age is one factor in establishing that identity and birthdays are celebrated symbols of growth. Establishing a fund of sexual knowledge, whether in the highly supervised classroom presentation and discussion, or in the less supervised classroom chatter or playground conversation, is another. Experimenting with sexual behavior in establishing relationships with the opposite sex is a third.

Becoming of age is critical and birthdays are of extreme importance to students. The celebration of a birthday marks yet another year in the progress from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. Birthdays are synonymous with attention, the presence of friends, games, gifts and special food. Even to a rather sophisticated adolescent, the countdown is important. Martin writes in his journal:

in six (May 20) more days it will be my birthday
but I am haveing (celebrating) it on friday.

May 14, 1985

Planning for the celebration is exciting as Tom's journal indicates.

Tomorrow is my birthday
and I become 12 years old
I am having a party
and we might be
going swimming we are going
to have a dart gun wars
and lots of neat
things to do.

May 31, 1985

Lori's account of her birthday overflows with excitement.

Dear journal yesterday was my
birthday and we won by 34 to 7
and they gave me the bumps and
it was sorta fun. And they
pinched me and said
a pinch to grow and inch
and then they slaped me
on my arm and
I didn't really hear what they
said and then Ann pulled
my hair so you won't sware
and then when I got home
my mother and father took
me out for dinner and today
I getting my bike.

May 9, 1985

The extreme importance of the birthday, the amount of time spent thinking about it, planning for it, preparing for it, partying and recalling of it justify its inclusion as a potential source of stress.

Knowledge of physical and emotional growth and development is presented formally during human sexuality sessions in May which are taught cooperatively by the classroom teacher and the public health nurse. The grades are separated for this presentation which consists of a film, a discussion period and a request for written questions.

The grade 5 students are out of the room.

> Erection and enlargement of penis material (is being presented). David and Michelle exchange shy smiles across the room. Most of the students are watching (the film) closely with their facial reactions being hidden from anyone.
>
> May 6, 1985

Nervous reactions include covering the face, giggling quietly and laughing with the hand in front of the face. Students are all respectful throughout the lesson and ask intelligent questions in a sensitive manner.

Less supervised chatter and conversation is sprinkled with allusions to sex, alcohol and drugs. Michelle talks about "rape" (May 31, 1985) and tells her mother jokingly that she is "pregnant" (May 14, 1985). She writes about being "drunk" (May 13, 1985) and reacts to a noise in the hall with "stoned" (May 8, 1985). Mary Beth and Elizabeth giggle together at the use of the word "affair" (May 16, 1985). David uses slang in his play on words when he says we are playing "The Grand Old Duke of Dork!" on our recorders (May 9, 1985). Michelle's use of slang to tell Martin off is an embarrassment, not to her, but to Marnie.

> Michelle to Martin (very softly), "Screw off, Martin!" I said, "Screw off!" Michelle is not self-conscious about the comment and does not look up to see whether or not I've heard. Marnie (her partner at the time) hears, looks up, checks to see I've heard, is a little embarrassed by being "caught" looking and hurriedly returns to her art work.
>
> May 7, 1985

Slang language with sexual connotations is seldom appropriate in class settings; Marnie is more upset by hearing it than Michelle is by using it or Martin is by being the recipient of the comment.

References to the rock music culture is indicative of adolescent

interests. Marnie plays Billy Idol music on her recorder (May 10, 1985) and Michelle writes Cyndi Lauper into her creative writing assignment as the president of the United States (May 15, 1985).

Program material which reflects the concerns of adolescents is fascinating to the students. Mr. Brown reads a book about a club of girls formed to torment a mature girl about her developed breasts. All are very attentive whenever the book is read (May 7, 1985).

Rapid shifts in behavior and attitude characterize the adolescent.

> Martin (was) running around chasing after a young girl earlier. This is so characteristic of him. One minute he is preening in the mirror at the back of the room and the next he is running after some younger girl in much the same manner as the boys in grade 4.
>
> May 6, 1985
> Noon

Martin, too, has learned how to achieve his personal goals which are contrary to the school rules without getting into trouble. He is a "lunch student" and, therefore, not allowed out of the playground to buy treats at the local store.

> Martin (is) asked at lunch time if (he) went out of the playground to buy something. (He had been eating a frozen treat of some kind.) He said Greg had got it for him.
>
> May 8, 1985

There is a serious tone in the classroom when the legal ramifications of the Young Offenders' Act are explained to the students (May 29, 1985).

Creating relationships with the opposite sex can be stressful. "Going with" implies some kind of conscious singling out of an individual of the opposite sex, a commitment is made between two people which is exclusive of others. Preferential treatment such as

sharing secrets or trading an article of clothing is part of the agreement. A demonstration of physical closeness is expected. Maintaining this type of relationship means arrangements are made as to how and when to communicate and where to meet.

Michelle is physically mature and appears socially confident. Emotionally, she is struggling to understand and make sense of the feelings she has for all of those around her. Sensitive, reflective and analytical about all of her relationships, she communicates her observations openly. Michelle talks of the complexities of trying to have a "going with" relationship. Parental opinion can be conflicting.

> Michelle: His parents don't think I'm right for him and that we'd have nothing in common . . .
>
> My mom says you should go over there . . . whenever you feel (like it) . . . whoever you feel is good for you, you know.

Communication under these circumstances can be difficult.

> Michelle: I'm not allowed to phone him, I'm not allowed to communicate with him. So he never calls me and I can't call him so we never talk to each other.

Misunderstandings exist between the participants regarding the nature of the relationship.

> Michelle: When he doesn't think that I'm around I see him with other girls. Like, when he says that I'm the only one he's going out with that I know it's a lie and he keeps on denying it . . .

The ensuing confusion, frustration and anger become pervasive and interfere with behavior and performance.

> Michelle: I was really mad at my game and, like, I was so bloody mad at myself 'cause I couldn't hit the ball further than halfway to third base.
>
> June 12, 1985

In contrast to "going with" one person for some time an encounter

is short lived. Nevertheless, certain skills are needed to deal with this interpersonal communication. In this example, Michelle must choose a contact, initiate a response, carry on a conversation, evaluate how the conversation is going, make a decision as to whether or not to continue, and then end the contact. She concludes with a statement about her own involvement.

> On Saturday . . . i went swimming
> and at the swimming pool
> i met a gorgous guy
> and Dennis' sister crystal
> dared me to go and ask
> him his name, how old
> he was and where he lived.
> his name is Garry he's
> 21 and he lives in green hill
> area ok then she dared
> me to ask him out!
> i did! he said yes! i called
> him a perv and said,
> "you would, i got a boyfriend
> and your not my type
> so leave me alone!" He
> told me he liked me
> to much to leave me
> alone and (I) told him
> "to go suck a lemon!"
> what a pervert i don't
> no how i get myself into these
> things.
>
> May 27, 1985

Michelle's experience suggests excitement, adventure and the possibility of romance. As well it suggests foolishness, self-doubt and the possibility of not being able to handle a situation which she initiated. Because the encounter is brief, it highlights the confusion and complexities involved in casual encounters such as this.

Findings

Students experience stress in developing a sexual identity. Birthdays themselves can be stressful because of the time and attention paid to the celebrations and the celebrant. Formal lessons on sexuality produce some embarrassment for the students; nervousness is evident. Casual conversation is sprinkled with sexual connotations which can be uncomfortable for others. Indicators of adolescent interest are rock music references and a fascination with issues of physical development. Adolescents also learn how to achieve personal goals within the restrictions of the school without being reprimanded. Establishing a relationship with the opposite sex can also be fraught with problems and produce stress. Parental opinions may be conflicting, communication can be difficult, misunderstandings can occur and the ensuing anger and confusion can interfere with behavior and performance. Many interpersonal skills are required to know how to initiate, continue and then break off a casual encounter. Excitement, adventure and the possibility of romance are accompanied by self-doubt and the possibility of not being able to handle the situation.

A Positive Self-Image

Outward appearance over which students have some control is of great importance to them. Clothes, accessories, haircuts and make-up make statements about individuals and groups, influencing both attitude and behavior. To a greater or lesser degree each student influences and is influenced by choices he or she makes as to what to wear and how to look.

Because attention to appearance requires time and energy and

frequently reflects other aspects of the individual, such as socio-economic level, it can become a source of anxiety and stress. Appearances also reflect an inner state of mind and can signify more than a passing interest in fad or fashion. Being popular, being unique and being accepted or rejected can be inextricably combined with one's outward appearance.

Grant is extremely conscious about the clothes he wears. He makes distinctive choices with his array of safari jackets and caps, fatigue outfits and designer clothes. Each ensemble is carefully chosen and, to some extent, determines what manner of play he adopts that day, how he moves and which character he assumes.

Mary Beth's interview documents her thoughts in her struggle to become an unique individual who is also popular. "Weird," "unusual" and "unique" are used descriptively to express the personal identity she wishes to achieve through behavior and dress.

Researcher: Tell me about something you said in your journal about wanting to be weird.

Mary Beth: I want to be unusual because, OK, grade 3 I was popular, grade 4 I was popular, grade 5? No one really cared about me, like: "Get lost, Shrimp!" You know! I want to be unique this year because grade 6 is the top of the school.

Researcher: Can you tell me a bit more specifically about how you're weird?

Mary Beth: Well, I sort of . . . I act differently to people's opinions . . . I'm sorta weird . . . I change my attitudes. I change my feelings among other people.

Researcher: How about the way you dress?

Mary Beth: Well, sometimes, you know, I had that long gold earring at the beginning of school. I felt, like, I don't know, I just want to be weird. I felt there's new fashions this year. I might as well

> go ahead and wear them. But, then I started . . . you know . . . they started dying down. I don't even wear earrings anymore, really. So I just . . . I'm getting back to normal, I hope, but I just . . . ah, wear strange outfits . . . just to stand out in a crowd to be popular this year 'cause last year was sort of a loss. But, you know, I just want to be popular.
>
> June 12, 1985

Mary Beth's perception of herself and ongoing analysis of her behavior are powerful forces in her life at this time.

Appearances serve as a vehicle by which to group together individuals with similar or complimentary adornments. The groups may range from an exclusive and secretive club to a team with readily recognized functions, name and symbol. The group may be determined by fashion or by interest and be permanent or impermanent in nature.

In addition to wanting to be a popular and unique individual, Mary Beth demonstrates the desire to be part of a group of two people. She and Elizabeth have organized two exclusive and secretive clubs with code names and a dress restriction.

> Elizabeth and I started this new club for just the two of us! We are the Pyt's! meaning 'Pretty young things!' We also have a fittness club called "the B and B fittness club! If you hear Elizabeth call me Dolci and I called her dottie, don't worry it's just our club code names!
>
> May 2, 1985

Researcher: Tell me about your club.

Mary Beth: We wear jelly shoes . . . and have to wear something pink.

May 7, 1985
A.M. Recess

Though the girls express the purpose of the club in terms of the activities they do, the club permits them to be mutually supportive

of each other's involvement in school and in outside school activities. In creating this strong partnership and identifying it to others by dress they have, unintentionally, limited themselves to other student contacts. Thus, when one partner is not present, the other is isolated and alone.

> Elizabeth (is) wandering by herself because Mary Beth is not here.
>
> May 3, 1985
> A. M. Recess

In contrast, Nancy has no need to create her own self-supportive group. Usually undemonstrative, she is unusually exhuberant about her baseball team's proposed activities to raise money for team jackets.

> Next week we're having a
> Bake sale, garage sale, and
> bottle drive. We're having that (to)
> raise money for team jackets.
>
> May 6, 1985

David, extremely involved in athletics, wears a Bombers jacket and cap and would like to wear them all the time. Athletics is one area in which he is not extremely critical of his own performance.

On another occasion, David demonstrates the side of his nature which is exceptionally critical of his appearance.

> This morning David came to school and announced, "I'm not taking off my hat." Fighting words! He's had a haircut and is very self-concscious about this. I ask David to take it off and he turns the cap around. Trying not to make a major issue about it, I wait until just before Mr. Brown comes into the room and ask him to take his cap off. He does and, at this point, he pulls his jacket up around his head. A moment later he has his cap on again.
>
> May 21, 1985

David is apparently anxious about how he looks to others and what

others will think and say about him. By covering his head with his cap he contravenes the rules of the school and classroom. By refusing to remove his cap when asked politely to do so he causes additional anxiety between teacher and student.

Fashion strongly influences both Martin and Michelle. Martin is one of the older students. Taller than the others and more mature in development, he wears clothes extremely well. He buys many of his own clothes and receives $20.00 per week to help him do so.

> Martin is very conscious about his appearance. When asked he said he dressed well because of "peer pressure." His friends, students in grades 8 and 9, are "rich" and "act snotty." He says he doesn't act like that here at Green Hill School.
>
> June 5, 1985

Martin's desk is positioned at the back of the room next to a glassed-in office. The glass reflects a clear image and he continually checks his hair, then smoothes it down or combs it flat. Exaggerated attention to dress curtailed Martin's participation in the Canada Fitness tests.

> Martin has no outside running shoes but wears good-looking fashionable ones. He claims he can't run yet when encouraged to do so, does well.
>
> May 1, 1985

Michelle, too, dresses with attention to fashion. Frequently, she changes outfits at lunch time to suit the appropriateness of the occasion. Make-up and hair alterations often accompany these changes. At an evening tea this entry is recorded:

> Michelle looked very sophisticated in a black print dress with appropriate make-up and attractive hair style. She managed (to serve) two very busy tables with a great deal of aplomb. Once she was "caught" chewing a cookie on the job.
>
> May 2, 1985

Michelle is expected to serve tea in a very specific manner for the first shift and then will herself be served at which time she can eat all she wants. Conflict, at times, occurs between expected and actual behavior when outward appearances determine the student act in a prescribed manner.

Findings

Students worry about what they look like, what others think they look like and what others will say. These perceptions help the student develop a positive or negative self-image and help also to determine the student's acceptance as a member of a group. When attention to physical appearance takes precedence over other concerns, when it contravenes rules or when appearance makes statements contrary to certain behavioral expectations, additional stress can be caused.

Changing Schools

Of twenty-one students in Room 2, six are grade 5 students and fifteen are grade 6 students. The six grade 5 students have all been at Green Hill School for some time. Of the fifteen grade 6 students, seven have been at Green Hill for some time, one came within the last two years, and seven registered in the current school year.

Of these seven newcomers, three registered at the beginning of the year. Two students arrived because their neighborhood schools had closed and one arrived from out of the province. Of the four students who came during the year, two came because of problems at their neighborhood school and two came because their families moved into the area. One of these families came from out of the province and

one family came from another part of the city.

Though the movement within the grade 6 class suggests a great transiency rate, Green Hill School is not recognized as having a highly transient population. Nevertheless, each adjustment to the class list precipitates adjustments in the social and academic lives of all of the students within that class.

John came from another province and another school system and registered at Green Hill at the beginning of his grade 6 year.

Researcher: Can you tell me what it was like to get acquainted at Green Hill?

John: I've been to Catholic schools all my life and I've never been to a public school before. And I was worried 'cause I heard that public schools weren't such nice schools but then I think it's better. Well, sort of better.

Researcher: What do you mean by "sort of better"?

John: Well, there's not very much religion at Green Hill . . . and in my other schools we had religion before lunch and . . . or after recess.

Researcher: You said you were worried about Green Hill. What were some of the things you were worried about?

John: Well, bad kids. Bad kids who skip school most of the time. But when I came to this school nobody was skipping school.

June 7, 1985

John's worries about the "bad kids" were abated as soon as he became familiar with his classmates. The unknown quality of a new school gave Mary Beth some concerns about her first days at Green Hill.

Mary Beth: I was sort of scared because I (only) knew one person . . . I've been jumping from school to school and didn't know what to expect here.

June 12, 1985

It took Mary Beth until October when she felt comfortable.

Researcher: Do you feel you've adjusted now?

Mary Beth: Yah, I think so.

Researcher: How did that happen?

Mary Beth: Well, since I met Elizabeth, and since I met Lori and Michelle and when Alexandra came I felt like I belonged to this school. In the beginning . . . I didn't know anybody really so . . . it was until October when I really knew somebody.

June 12, 1985

Meeting friends helped Mary Beth adjust to Green Hill. It is when Alexandra, a newcomer, arrives long after the beginning of the school year that Mary Beth feels like she really belongs. Tom, too, talks of making friends from whom he is then somewhat removed by the position of his desk in the classroom.

Tom: It was quite weird at the beginning because I was sitting in a desk at the back of the room and I didn't know anybody, except for Richard and Matthew . . . way at the other side of the room.

June 7, 1985

For Tom there had been other changes as well.

Tom: There was different teachers, different ways the school was being run to other schools that I've been to . . . I thought that the playground space was a little bit smaller but, all in all, it (the adjustment) was quite good.

June 7, 1985

The academic program in different classrooms can cause concern with different program emphasis and a change in textbooks. The expectations for assignments, homework and study habits can appear to be quite different, for the student, as well.

Researcher: Tell me what was the hardest thing . . . about coming to a different school.

Alexandra: Learning the new work and the different curriculums 'cause lots of the things I did at Prince William

I'm repeating here. I wasn't using the same textbooks or anything.

June 12, 1985

Researcher: Is there anything about school that gives you some concerns?

Mary Beth: I didn't have any homework last year (when I was at Princess Diana) so it's really hard to get used to this year.

June 12, 1985

More than one new student mentioned the interest in meeting new people and doing new things as positive influences which assisted them in their adjustment to a new school.

Researcher: Who helped you with that (adjusting to Green Hill)?

Andrew: Um, Geoff, Matthew, Richard, that's about it.

Researcher: OK.

Andrew: And everybody else, but not that much.

June 12, 1985

Alexandra: I've met lots of new people and learned lots of new things and done . . . lots of stuff we do here I didn't do in our other school like Musical Theatre and Family Time and those kinds of things.

June 12, 1985

Moves within the elementary program represent one type of change; moves from an elementary to a junior high program represent another. Although the six grade 5 students who were a part of this combined class travelled to a neighboring junior high school for the orientation program and were aware of the numerous enquiries made about junior high program and school choices, they made little or no comment about the inevitable change to their own lives; perhaps they felt the impending adjustment to be somewhat removed from more immediate concerns. Therefore, the observations about the junior high program are made by the

grade 6 students for whom the adjustment would be both real and immediate.

Choosing a junior high school involves making evaluative judgments. Martin based his observations on the experience of his friends. Originally, he had applied to go to an academically oriented school but had not been accepted; now, he is forced to consider a school which had not been his first choice.

> Martin talked about going to Harrow now instead of Churchill Heights where he had applied to go.
>
> He wasn't looking forward to going to Harrow because:
> (1) he doesn't like the principal,
> (2) the math teacher is a real ogre, and
> (3) some of the kids are tough.
>
> June 5, 1985

Martin's observations are concerned with the personal element; an orientation program provided additional program, timetable, and site information.

This orientation program was held by the local junior high school, Harrow, on the afternoon of Thursday, May 9, in the school building itself. Unlike the previous year, when the principal made a presentation at Green Hill, this plan proved to be more valuable. The students heard the presentation and an orchestral concert and were given guided tours of the school. Student journals on the next day record the following entries. Nancy says:

> The (presentation) was very good. It
> was better (than) last year (when)
> Mr. Black came to the school.
> So many people got lost at Harrow
> on the first day.
>
> May 10, 1985

Tom, who is also going to Harrow, observes:

> I thought that the school was
> big too too many floor too many
> rooms I don't know how long
> it toke for the grade 7 classes to
> learn their way around.
>
> May 10, 1985

Mary Beth, who chose to attend Glenhaven, states:

> I don't think I could get usued to that
> school though, it's too big and sorta
> spooky!
>
> May 10, 1985

These students were struck by the massiveness of the building and saw it as a somewhat threatening medieval labyrinth in which one could easily get lost.

Decisions are sometimes based on family influences, such as sibling attendance or parental impressions. Mary Beth will attend Glenhaven where her brother goes.

> Mary Beth: Even if it's far for me I have to go there 'cause my brother goes there. My mom doesn't want to go to two different schools, you know, getting two different systems.
>
> June 12, 1985

Mary Beth's attendance at Glenhaven because of familial convenience, will disturb the very close friendship she has achieved with Elizabeth, who is expected to attend Harrow.

> Elizabeth: My brother goes there, too, and I know some kids there, so, my mom wants me to go there. It might be easier, because then we can either take the bus, or walk, or whatever . . .
>
> June 12, 1985

Elizabeth's reasoning is similar to Mary Beth's, although the outcomes result in a different decision for another location.

David's family is moving to another neighborhood within the city which necessitates David's attendance at another school.

Researcher: Can you tell me all your thoughts about moving.

David: I think it's going to be difficult because you have to pack, you have to make new friends, and have to get to know the school . . . have to look around the school. It's going to be awkward.

Researcher: How about going to junior high next year?

David: That'll be more difficult because you have to work harder and you have to do more thinking.

June 5, 1985

John's family is returning to the province, system and school from which they were temporarily removed.

Researcher: What kind of questions do you have about going back to a place you were at before?

John: If it's going to be the same or not . . . if people, um, have changed in some ways.

June 7, 1985

David, moving to a neighborhood and school of which he knows little, mentions the quality of the work he will be expected to produce; whereas John, returning to an environment which is very familiar to him, mentions the change in the people. For David, work is the common element between the familiar and unfamiliar school settings, although he expects it to be more challenging. For John, people are the common element in past and future settings; coping with the changes will be his challenge.

Tom's experience with registering at Harrow was unprecedented in his experiences at elementary school.

Tom: Well, yesterday, when I went over to put in my application form for Harrow Junior High, I walked in. There was two . . . they looked like grade 9 (students). One of them was fooling around with a knife, and the other was just sitting there talking to a girl and then (I) just walked in and (they) didn't say anything . . . walked out. They didn't say anything.

June 7, 1985

Although Tom was not terrified by his experience, he certainly was wary and thoughtful; his perceptions should serve to make him better equipped to deal with similar situations next year. Tom describes beginning junior high as "starting all over again."

Researcher: How about in terms of subjects? What are you going to study?

Tom: I've taken a . . . taken quite a thought at that sometimes. It's just sorta like starting grade 1 over again 'cause you go to 1 . . . grade 1 to 6, and then you gotta go to 7 to 12 . . . 'cause just like starting grade 1 over again.

June 7, 1985

Perhaps Tom's own analogy will help him realize that, if junior high is like "starting all over again" in grade 1, he can handle it.

Michelle, who has friends in junior high, is unsure about where she will be going and what the experience will be like. She jokes about wanting to be an "elementary drop-out" but is serious about her fears of junior high.

Researcher: Tell me about next year . . . junior high.

Michelle: Junior high has always scared me . . . like, it's like, when I was a kid I didn't want to grow up and here I am, practically grown up here . . . six years left of school and it scares me 'cause like, I don't know, it just scares me.

June 12, 1985

Michelle then says it is getting along with people, not the program which scares her; specifically, she mentions power struggles and fights.

Two students did not wish to "be froshed": Mary Beth did not want her brother's friends to get her and Martin did not want to get shampoo on his gym shoes.

Findings

Actual changes for the grade 5 and 6 classroom at Green Hill School had the following characteristics. Some students came from other systems in other provinces; others came from the same system within the city. Although the grade 5 students remained the same, almost half of the grade 6 students transferred into Room 2 in the current school year. Concerns expressed by these students had to do with not knowing any students, knowing few students, and predicting that the students would be "bad kids." Different curricula, different treatment of subjects, and different expectations as to how, for example, homework was handled were also concerns. Changes in systems, teachers, playgrounds and the methods of running the school were sources of stress. New and different activities added to the excitement of the adjustment. Above all, other students helped ease the anxieties associated with a change of schools.

Anticipated change from elementary to junior high school carried with it the following concerns. Making a choice involved needing sufficient, accurate information from previous students and from the school itself, considering the convenience of other family members, having some program information, and making a wise decision. Non-acceptance of a student in a chosen school occurred only once. Finding one's way in an unfamiliar building, making new friends and encountering new experiences were also noted. Power struggles, fights and "being froshed" were also mentioned as problems.

CHAPTER FIVE

Observations, Comparisons, Reflections and Implications

The sources of stress as experienced by elementary school students in their natural environment of the classroom and playground are revealed through this study. Twenty-one students were the subjects in this ethnographic study in which field notes, journal writings and interviews were used as data gathering techniques. Data were analyzed and the sources of stress were reported in thirteen categories: Physical Activity, A Healthy Body, Friends, Family, Expectations, Communication, Evaluation, Responsibility, Self-Control, A Sense of Order, Sexual Identity, A Positive Self-Image and Changing Schools. Each of the categories represented a set of needs or concerns of the students which had the potential to become a source of stress for them. The concluding statements of each category are brief summaries of the findings of the study.

Observations from the Findings

In keeping with the original intent of this study which was to describe stress from the unique perspectives of the students and in a continuing effort to maintain this individuality, the concluding comments based on the findings are expressed as observations rather than as conclusions. Yet no matter how the individual perspective is guarded and maintained certain generalizations are necessary in order to convey the complex cultural system of the school environment. A

blend of both specific and general observations is attempted in the discussions of the sources of stress in students, the sources of stress in school and the nature of coping.

The Sources of Stress in Students

The sources of stress among these grade 5 and 6 students appeared to be highly personalized in nature. The perception of a potentially stressful experience and the meaning of that experience for the student were highly dependent upon the personal perspective. For example, the tightening of braces which one student considered painful, yet beneficial in the long run, was not a matter of concern at all for another. In a similar vein, the intensity of a stressful experience and the length of time one particular stressor had an effect on a student varied as to the personal perception of that student. Adjusting to Green Hill School took Andrew very little time at all for a few friends helped him feel comfortable in the new setting almost immediately. Mary Beth's adjustment took much longer and was combined with her feelings about friends, her past experiences of jumping from one school to another, the changes in academic expectations such as homework and wanting to be weird in the sense of being both popular and unique. She reported that she felt comfortable only after Alexandra arrived in October. In reality, Alexandra arrived in March, suggesting that Mary Beth's period of adjustment lasted longer than even she realized.

What appeared to be an imagined, exaggerated or foolish concern to others was regarded as a very real issue to the student experiencing it. David's refusal to remove his cap in class because he had had a recent haircut seemed an unnecessary concern. Yet his anticipation of

conflict with the teacher, creativity in adjusting the cap and willingness to contravene classroom rules suggest that his haircut or the accompanying altered self-image was a very real source of stress for him.

Each student also exhibited evidence of being affected by a number of stressors which were different from the number and nature of stressors affecting other students in the same setting. For example, while one girl concentrated on dressing stylishly and establishing a relationship with a boyfriend, another girl of similar age worried about passing her grade and guarded the friendship of another girl to the exclusion of all boys.

Sources of stress were made manifest through experiences which gave evidence of student concern, problems or worries; these experiences appeared to be highly complex in nature. A clear connection between the source itself and the experience through which the stress was made manifest was sometimes difficult to assess and analyze. Ross' constant efforts to communicate with his hands were suggestive of a number of sources; the need to express himself in a way in which he would be understood and the need to be recognized by the teacher and his classmates were two possibilities. Stressful experiences were often interrelated; that is, stress in a physiological sense was accompanied by stress in a psychological and behavioral sense. Geoff broke a bone in his heel; the discomfort and inconvenience irritated him and made him annoyed and angry. Activity and involvement were restricted; he became increasingly stubborn about having to "go easy" on his foot. Moreover, a hierarchy of stress experiences was implied

in this study. That is, it was difficult for students to concentrate on achievement needs if physiological needs were not being met; for example, it was difficult for Mary Beth to perform well on a test when she had a migraine headache.

The Sources of Stress in School

School provides a cultural environment in which an abundance of potentially stressful experiences exists for these students. The nature of school and schooling is such that a framework is set by government departments in curriculum guides, district offices in outlines and handbooks, and school and classroom expectations in plans and lessons. Rules and regulations govern the behavior of students who occupy the same space at the same time in the same program.

However, operating within this framework are the students who create in it a reality of their own. The students in this study had been part of the school system for as few as six years and as many as eight years. Much of the system to many of these students had become internalized and habitual. The internalization of the characteristics of school and schooling allowed them to deal with their own needs and to accomplish their own ends in a manner which was not particularly disruptive to the educational framework. Thus, students listened to lessons, responded to questions and worked on projects and assignments. In this way they were socialized to the demands and expectations of school. Yet, under the guise of being involved in their work, games were played, relationships were created, maintained and ended and fashions were discussed.

In this manner, the educational framework did not totally confine

these students. Each affected the cultural environment of the classroom with his own experiences, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. Each, in turn, was affected by the cultural environment which was, in part, a composite of the experiences, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the other students. Thus, the environment was dynamic and ever-changing, as were the needs which emerged from it for each student. Student needs which were not met or satisfied were problems, concerns and worries which were the sources of stress. It follows then that anything at all which was a part of this dynamic and ever-changing environment had the potential to become a source of stress for the students.

The sources of stress experienced by the students in this study were expressed in categories which are life-long concerns. That is, the needs of a healthy body, good quality relationships with friends and family, effective communication, a sense of order and a positive self-image are needs which persist throughout life. Therefore, it appears that student needs which were expressed at school by these grades 5 and 6 students were those which existed on a much larger canvas than that contained by the educational framework arranged by the adults in the school environment.

The Nature of Coping

The findings suggest that coping with the stress experience operates at both the subconscious and conscious level in the school environment. First, subconscious coping occurred when habitual behaviors were exhibited in order to overcome difficulties. Habitual behavior, such as Ross' need to communicate effectively by moving his

hands was, at times, distracting and disturbing to others. Nevertheless, it was his most effective way of coping with the stressful experience of being unable to speak accurately and with meaning. Andrew's restless activity and Richard's passivity which were so persistent as to be personality traits are also suggestive of habitual behavioral patterns of coping.

Second, conscious coping was dependent upon the awareness of the stress experience, communication of the experience and dealing successfully with the experience. Many students were capable of identifying various stressful experiences and writing or telling about them. Communication of the experience appeared to help relieve stress and prevent it from becoming excessive. Although the journal writing exercise was not designed to be a means by which problem-solving would occur, Alexandra found that communicating a stressful experience was useful in and of itself.

> I wish we could keep
> on writing in our journals.
> It helped alot to let out
> my feelings and be helped.
>
> May 31, 1985

Students often sought friends who helped them understand stressful experiences.

Students, themselves, developed their capacities and potential to deal successfully with stress. Interpersonal, goal-setting and problem-solving skills which the students utilized in order to deal successfully with stress are those skills required throughout life. Students in this study often talked about stress experiences and coping with them in much the same breath, indicating their already

developed and developing abilities to maintain a healthy balance between recognizing sources of stress and dealing with them successfully.

In summary, the observations of this study reveal that sources of stress among these grades 5 and 6 students were many and varied. Almost anything at all became a source of stress for them. School provided a cultural environment in which an abundance of potentially stressful experiences existed for these students. These stressful experiences were highly personalized and complex for the student experiencing them. Communication of a stressful experience to a trusted and/or informed individual helped to alleviate the stress. Students themselves were capable of developing and utilizing the skills necessary to alleviate the stress in their lives.

Comparisons of the Related Literature and Research

The primary purpose of this ethnographic study was to describe stress as experienced by grades 5 and 6 students in their natural environment. Although somewhat limited in generalizability because of the small sample size and limited time in the field, the findings of this study gain credence by comparison with the findings of the related studies discussed in Chapter Two.

Stress in Children

Coddington (1972) used an adaptation of the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire—frequently called the Life Events Scale—in his research with students from a normal population. Certainly, life events are extremely traumatic; however, in this study

only ten out of the thirty-five items on the Coddington scale were observed. It appears that life events were not the only concerns which troubled students. Coddington himself states that a number of rather insignificant events occurring during a given period of time may add up to a greater stress than a single obviously traumatic event.

Generally, what was observed and recorded in this study were those rather insignificant events occurring during the school day. In order to gain a more complete picture of the stress experiences of students an argument might be made for using more than one type of observation instrument. Whereas measuring stress according to a scale would provide some insight into how traumatic life events in the past may have influenced the student's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors in the present, describing stress experiences in the present cultural context would provide insight as to how the student was actually handling daily stress experiences. The findings resulting from the two observational methodologies would complement one another.

Schultz and Heuchert (1983) observed that physical and psychological stress interact with one another; the observation was borne out by this study. Allergies, bronchitis and asthma are stress-related physical disorders which proved debilitating particularly for Richard, Lori and Alexandra. Absenteeism, lowered concentration, misunderstanding of directions and instruction occurred because of the disorder and/or accompanying medication. Getting behind in school work and being isolated from friends were additional sources of stress. In this way the interrelatedness of the stressful experiences is evident.

McNamee (1981) stated that a child's psychological reaction to stressful experiences depends upon the child's perception of the experience and of himself. David, for example, was extremely critical of the work expected of him in terms of written assignments. He did not like the sound of his voice on tape and felt extremely self-conscious about his new haircut. David had frequent problems out on the playground and in the classroom with Tom. In many ways, he was a valuable member of the class with positive contributions as a Family Time leader. Yet, David's perceptions of experiences and of himself were sources of stress and he was unable to believe he was worthy and capable.

Stress in School

Stroebel's (1982) observations regarding the discipline, confinement and pressure of parent expectations are specifically geared to the school-starting age of five or six. "Discipline" was not used as a term in this study for it was assumed that discipline was an adult-applied management and organizational term; students seldom, if ever, referred to themselves as "discipline problems" unless they are told repeatedly that this is what they are and no students in this study used the term in that manner. The problems of confinement are suggested in the students' efforts to be involved in movement, gesture and play to satisfy the need for physical activity. Stroebel's observation of parental expectations was not directly mentioned but could be implied in the recorded student worries about evaluation. Comments about how marks in elementary school may be reviewed in junior high and university reflect the concerns of an adult who

understands how present performance affects future success.

Most of Miller's (1982) observations of stress in school were also observed and recorded in this study. Relationships with friends and classmates of the same sex or the opposite sex proved to be of extreme concern to the students. Restriction of space in desks and classrooms was, at least, partially responsible for the movement, gesture and play which also echo Stroebel's comments about confinement. Relief from the tedium of routine studies was provided by the magazines and games which were brought to the classroom, movement around the classroom and conversation about fashions or friends which occurred while studies were pursued. Combatting loneliness by establishing good quality relationships was paramount. Some, but not all, of the students regarded a failed test as a catastrophe, although in Mark's case his nonchalance over a low test score belied a deeper caring for achievement. Students, generally, were concerned about achievement, personal appearance and acceptance.

Miller's observations which were not supported in this study were the yearly switch of teachers and the daily switch of subjects and classes. Perhaps because this study was limited somewhat by not being longitudinal in nature, the observations were not supported. Nevertheless, grades 5 and 6 students have also become somewhat socialized to teacher, grade and classroom changes and to the fact that they are part of an organization in which they have little to say about the rules and regulations by which they must abide.

Youngs' (1983) study documented the sources of stress in students as they progress through school and the signals by which we

recognize the stressors. Although the findings of this ethnographic study depended upon the small number of grade 5 students involved, Youngs' findings concur with the experiences specified by these six students. On an individual basis they exhibited the signals of not wanting to be involved in Canada Fitness activities, of being anxious about close friends, of carelessly treating test results and assignments, of being extremely conscious about clothes and concerned about passing grade 5.

Experiences of the fifteen grade six students included all of Youngs' signals as well. Nonparticipation in Canada Fitness activities and gossip, rumors and jokes about sexuality are recorded. Some students concentrated on homework and others procrastinated with it. Experimentation with hair and clothes was recorded with both sexes. The tendency to select numerous friends but guard a particular friend is also recorded, especially among the girls.

In summary, there appears to be general concurrence between the findings of this study and the findings of the research and observations in the literature which are discussed in Chapter Two. Regardless of the methodology used, these findings suggest that the sources of stress are many and varied, that almost any concern can become a source of stress for the student and that school provides a cultural environment in which an abundance of potentially stressful experiences exists.

Reflections on the Methodology

Chapter One stated that the design of this study which used students both as subjects and respondents might enhance the knowledge

of doing ethnographic research with children. With this intent the methodology is reflected upon in the following sections: the design of the study, participant observation and collection and analysis of the data.

Design of the Study

The students in this study were, by nature, open and trusting when they felt that the response to their writing, speaking and behavior was basically nonjudgmental and supportive. Both in the field study and in the actual study students became comfortable with the researcher presence, and, in some cases, forgot completely that an adult was observing their actions.

> Interesting that at this time David checks to see that the teacher is watching and is careful to not be caught in the act. He disregards the fact that I am there behind him--an indication that, if he thinks about it at all, I am the observer.
>
> May 8, 1985

Interference was necessary only when the safety and welfare of the students were threatened or when behavior was totally unacceptable.

The power of children to be instrumental in their own control of stress became evident and was a source of inspiration throughout the study. Some students sought other students and close friends to help them deal with concerns; other students applied problem-solving skills to help themselves understand stressful experiences more clearly and still others maintained a balanced outlook on life and were not overwhelmed by the many potentially stressful experiences with which they were surrounded.

Participant Observation

Smith and Geoffrey (1968:9-12) made reference to their nonparticipant observer and participant observer roles in their study; in this case the researcher attempted both of these roles.

As nonparticipant observer the researcher had no responsibility for directing lessons, monitoring behavior or making decisions. This lack of need for active intervention provided the time to explore and speculate motives behind behavior, to attend to greater detail in the context of the experience and to follow responses from one situation to another.

In contrast, as participant observer and teacher there was virtually no time at all for recording data on the spot for the students required instruction and assistance in mathematics, music and art; observations were recorded later in a reflective mode. As participant observer and administrator some time was required for responding to emergencies, dealing with other students, impromptu parent conferences and a meeting for principals. However, students and staff were tolerant and understanding of the role shifts required in the research as long as they did not obviously interfere with their own needs and goals.

Collection of the Data

Triangulation of data collection techniques proved beneficial. Participant observation field notes captured the need for movement, activity and play which would have otherwise gone unrecorded. Journal writing allowed for the private thoughts to be shared and explored—the secretive information not easily revealed through interviews or

observation. Interviews were immediate in nature. Few students were noticeably nervous; most enjoyed the indulgence of being able to speak to an attentive principal during school time on topics which evoked their experiences and perceptions.

Not only did certain techniques capture certain behaviors but certain students were portrayed more deeply, move sensitively and more reflectively through triangulation. Some students wrote well in their journals; others expressed themselves well in the interview. Field note observation, in contrast, captured the reticence of students who wrote little or nothing or who chose not to be interviewed.

Generally speaking, the students felt proud to be involved in a study for which a completed written product would be the result and enjoyed the idea of confidentiality. Although, by and large, the students were cooperative and willing subjects there was still an intuitive sense that not all of the concerns, problems, troubles and worries had been revealed. Some deeply hidden sources of stress are difficult to uncover such as the hurt of rejection, loneliness, the pressure to succeed, the fear of failure and sexual wonderings.

Analysis of the Data

Researcher perspective and decision-making are crucial in the analysis and reporting of data collected by ethnographic techniques. Analysis consists of interpretation of the data and creation of the categories which emerge from the data. Reporting consists of explanation description of the data.

A crucial decision in analysis is the depth and degree of interpretation of what is meant by a statement or behavior; not all

details can possibly be known to the researcher. To interpret more deeply may have required more time in the field, more in-depth probing of the subjects or greater knowledge of the cultural context. Yet, given the time, subjects and knowledge of the context, the researcher was forced to make judgments which would describe this cultural context with accuracy and meaning. Another analyst, given the same data, could conceivably create alternate categories and perhaps give different emphasis in reporting the observations. In other words, researcher bias is an inevitable but potentially valuable contribution in terms of experience and background in any particular study.

Reporting, too, involves making decisions as to how much contextual detail is required to portray the situation as completely and realistically as possible. The researcher avoided inferring too much in the reporting of the data for it was felt that a delicate balance had to be maintained between allowing the data to speak for itself and shaping the data in some meaningful way for reporting. As the study progressed and more data became available, the qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to move from an initial interpretation to a more complete understanding of the sources of student stress.

The observation that the findings generated by this qualitative study were generally in agreement with the findings deduced from empirical studies suggest that both approaches exhibit considerable validity. As was implied in the comparison of the literature, more than one way of gathering and analyzing data gives a more complete picture of the reality of stress in the students' cultural context.

Implications

The findings and consequent observations of this study have implications for adults. Adults, in this context, are the "significant adults within the school setting who have some degree of influence over the organizational and interpersonal experiences of the students" referred to in Chapter One.

Implications: The Sources of Stress in Students

These implications follow from the findings and observations which suggest that sources of stress are highly personalized and complex in nature. The following implications are general suggestions, keeping in mind that each classroom and each student require specific tailoring and application of these recommendations.

1. Continue or initiate programs which have to do with self-awareness, feelings and self-management.

2. Promote programs concerning problem-solving, particularly in the behavioral and sociological contexts.

3. Be very aware of the sources of stress in the lives of individual students which are, or could become, excessive and, therefore, damaging psychologically and physiologically.

4. Identify and assist the students who are not so easily labelled as "stressed." Among them are: the silent, noncommunicative student who has difficulty communicating with adults and other students in any way; the good, compliant student whose problems are not acted out and may never be detected; and the "up and with it" student who is striving to become, or to stay, popular and successful.

Implications: The Sources of Stress in School

These implications follow from the findings and observations regarding the school environment as providing an abundance of potentially stressful experiences. The school is also capable of providing programs and opportunities to learn and practice stress management.

1. Incorporate into curricular programs subject material which describes, discusses, analyzes and treats with good humour and common sense, some of the concerns familiar to students.

2. Elicit suggestions and recommendations from the students themselves with respect to pertinent issues when planning classroom material and programs.

3. Provide students with responsibilities which challenge their intellectual, social, emotional and creative capabilities.

4. Structure the roles they are expected to play so that the responsibilities are well understood and guide them constructively while they are growing with these responsibilities.

5. Help students set goals and order priorities. Praise them when they make perceptible progress towards accomplishing their goals and teach them how to evaluate their own performance fairly and realistically.

Implications: The Nature of Coping

These implications follow from the findings and observations regarding the nature of coping which suggest that students learn well from other students and from trusted, experienced and informed adults.

1. Believe that each student means to be sensitive, responsible, cooperative and productive; assist the students in believing this about themselves and encourage the belief in others.

2. Facilitate open and honest communication; be available to students and allow students to be available to counsel each other.

3. Whenever possible provide personalized attention to students. Often they do not want directives but they do want assistance in gaining greater insights into issues of their own concerns. Help them also to understand the perspectives of others.

4. Set an example of a well balanced individual who is physically and emotionally healthy.

5. Be a good model of one who copes well, who creates challenges out of potentially stressful situations, works through them and emerges successfully. Help them to understand that it is also all right to make mistakes.

Implications for Further Research

The experiences during this participative study of stress in students have contributed to the development of implications for further research in this area.

Because of its limited generalizability resulting from a limited time in the field, the study could be replicated over a longer period of time to assess whether or not a longitudinal study would reveal additional findings. Because of its small sample size, the study might be replicated with a much larger population in order to compare findings which would emerge from a greater number of students. The study, too, could be replicated at other levels in order to determine

specific findings at, for example, the primary, junior high and senior high school levels.

Further research on stress in students might help clarify the significant sources of excessive stress in the students' experiences. In addition, studies to determine the significant sources of excessive stress precipitated by the school environment as opposed to environmental factors outside the school would increase the knowledge and understanding of student stress.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FIELD TESTING OF THE METHODOLOGY

Field Testing of the Methodology

Field testing of the research methodology was carried out at another location in the middle of May during one week of the school year prior to the school year of the actual study. A critical difference between roles is noted: the researcher in the field test approached the setting as a graduate student; the researcher in the study itself is an administrator and teacher. It was recognized, therefore, that this role differentiation would somewhat influence the nature of the observations. However, it was the process of observation rather than the product of observation which was of prime importance at this time.

Goals of the field testing were the following:

1. to test the techniques and tools of the methodology in data collection;
2. to gather observational data in a setting similar to the setting of the actual study;
3. to assess the effect that the participant observer had on the behavior of the students in this setting; and
4. to organize, categorize and codify the data.

The findings were as follows.

1. Primary techniques for data collection drew the following observations. Participant observation provided an overwhelming amount of rich data from student behavior, conversation, gesture and written material which was recorded in the classroom, in the lunchroom and on the playground. Structured interviews of small groups and individuals proved the informants to be willing to share experiences and perceptions and eager to cooperate in the study itself. Unstructured

interviews yielded less information; reticence on the part of the researcher to impose conversation seemed to be the major factor. Case studies were not pursued in the limited time available because of the necessity for further involvement of school personnel time and the necessity for obtaining permission to gain access to student files.

Recording tools were used experimentally. Handwritten field notes were possible at any location because of the portability of pen and notebook. However, because they required hours of transcription later on, a tendency to edit while writing was noted. On the other hand, using the computer with a word processing program tended to yield more detailed information. Storage on disc and printing of observations took virtually no time at all; any necessary editing took place later. However, portability posed a problem. Therefore, the computer was used in the classroom and the notebook was used in the music room and in the gymnasium.

A desk top tape recorder was used first in structured group settings and then in individual settings. Beyond an initial curiosity of the students, and after a brief explanation by the researcher as to the rationale for using the recorder and confidentiality of the material being recorded, the instrument was hardly cause for reticence or concern. Carrying out small group sessions sitting on the floor in a circle formation did much to establish an atmosphere of trust and openness. The tape recorder on the playground proved to be an item of curiosity only to children in the other rooms who had not been extensively informed as to researcher role and procedures. Any attempt to conceal the instrument in clothing designed for this purpose led to

interviews yielded less information; reticence on the part of the researcher to impose conversation seemed to be the major factor. Case studies were not pursued in the limited time available because of the necessity for further involvement of school personnel time and the necessity for obtaining permission to gain access to student files.

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much frustration and loss of valuable time with the students.

2. Neighborhood, school and classroom were chosen to resemble closely the setting of the intended study; number and characteristics of the students were also considered. Administrative style, teacher philosophy and methodology as well as organization of program were taken into account. The richness of the data gathered in the setting was convincing evidence that the actual study could be carried out successfully in a complimentary setting.

3. Partly because of brief, logical and truthful statements made earlier in an introductory session, the participant observer was accepted as a college student. Unsolicited verbal comments during the week and solicited written responses after the week was over showed that, although the students were usually aware of someone else being in the room, the effects on their own behavior were minimal.

Subjective reflections were invaluable. For example, on a field trip when the intervention of another adult was necessary for the children's safety, the field notes record the following comments.

> It is extremely difficult today to maintain the observer role! When the responsibility of another adult with a group is needed, the teacher/administrator role comes forth.
>
> May 17, 1984

Researcher awareness of personal feelings, role shifts and accompanying responsibilities, and concern for the truthfulness of the data at all times were taken into account.

4. Handwritten field notes were transcribed and filed appropriately in chronological order with the computer print-out sheets. Tapes were also transcribed: unstructured material was transcribed by the researcher in order that ongoing editing could take place;

structured material was transcribed by a professional and all information recorded verbatim. Master copies were stored and any number of additional copies needed were reproduced so that color coding, cutting, pasting and sorting could take place. Categories began to emerge.

At this point the researcher questioned the value of further pursuing the field test. The ethical question of intervention into the personal lives of the children without an accompanying responsibility to help them, even at a later date, loomed large. Goals of the field testing had been met and had assisted in two important ways:

1. definition and refinement of data collection techniques; and
2. expanding and narrowing of the conceptual aspect of stress in students.

Researcher Note:

Much rich data was assembled in one week. The time allotted was more than sufficient to refine data collection techniques and to understand how stress can be perceived and articulated in student experiences. Increased researcher confidence and extended time in the field in an alternate location would have meant that the field testing and the actual study itself could have been accomplished in the same school year.

August 3, 1985

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS

C I T Y P U B L I C S C H O O L S

Green Hill School

April 23, 1985

Dear Parent:

At present I am completing studies for a Master's degree in Educational Administration at the University of Province.

Permission has been granted by the research department of City Public Schools and by our Associate Superintendent, Mr. George Williams, to carry out my research at Green Hill School.

Mr. Jim Brown has kindly agreed to participate in the study with our grade 5 and 6 students.

My study will involve observing students interacting with one another and with their teachers. I will record what they say and do in the classroom, in the lunchroom and on the playground. In no way should the recording of my observations adversely affect classroom routine and learning.

In compiling my research findings, confidentiality will be assured.

If you have any concerns please call me at my office at 432-4913.

Yours truly,

Enid Botchett
Principal

APPENDIX C

CATEGORIES ARISING OUT OF THE OBSERVATIONS

Categories Arising out of the Observations

Relationships with friends

Ownership of Things
People

Space: Not enough, too much, too many people in one spot

Order -in
-out of

Responsibility

Structure -Routine
-Expectations
-Discipline

Activities -Involvement

Meaning -what do they mean?
-what does this assignment mean?
-what happens as a result of?
-does this count on the report card?
-finding meaning

Physical Aspect -movement
-development
-special things: braces, glasses

Communication (Learning Style) -receptive
-active
-formal; structured
-casual; unstructured

Others -identification with
-the other kids did

Justice -Right/Wrong
-Appropriate/Inappropriate

Pace and Style: Each his/her own

Need for Physical Touching
Physical Moving

Competition vs. Self Evaluation

Researcher's Field Notes
May 15, 1985

APPENDIX D

SECOND COPY CODED FIELD NOTES

MAY 8, 1985

(Yellow code for first quarter of the day.)

Sixthday 1
Wednesday, May 8

8:45 a.m. Music and mathematics—day for the ratio test. 7
Begin the ratio test and all quiet as they begin. EB
explained the attitude survey to the children saying that the 9
responses that they give would reflect on the way they feel
about school. If they feel negative about their school they
really should feel some responsibility for that feeling. If
they feel positive about school they should feel that they
have made a contribution to that feeling as well.

Ross asked if we could get the marks back today and the answer 7
was, "Yes." He said, "Good!"

Typed on green paper

Sixthday A.M. Recess
Wednesday, May 8

Spent about all recess getting Karl in to serve his suspension
and talking to Adam re:

his relationship with David Little and the problems yesterday
when he came up Tom.

(Green code for second quarter of the day)

Sixthday 2
Wednesday, May 8

CPS standardized reading test immediately after recess. 7
10:58 a.m. After general hubbub, class settles down to
begin the test questions 43-88, second section.
Ross has a drink of water. 1
JB: "Begin, grade 6s!"
"Grade 5s. Turn to page 13 in your booklets."
"Page 13, Ross, please!"
Morning is generally pleasant with quite a bit of work being
accomplished without too much fooling around.

MATH earlier: test situations seem OK with children knowing 7
what is expected of them in terms of behavior. Also, the 9
grade 6 students were repeating a test which had been done
before.

However, both the grade 5 and 6 students begin to do
geometry: review to some extent for both. A certain segment
of students always asks questions without reading the 5
directions as they are stated in the text . . . Mark, even
Geoff.

Would be interesting to take the questions from the attitude survey in order to design questions for interview periods next week. Be sure and ask JB about interviews with students—after you find out which ones would be willing to give some time before and/or after school for this.

JB reading a letter which Alexandra brought to school today. She is quite weak physically after having a trying time with bronchitis last week. She did well on her math test receiving 20 out of 21 answers correctly. 2

Wonder if this typing on the computer is a problem to anyone . . . could ask them tomorrow morning.

Students completing math work quickly this morning in order to go on to something else were Grant, Dennis and Tom. Martin and Michelle said that they did not have the assignment sheet for math when both did upon looking. 1 9

Martin asks Nancy for an eraser. 6

11:10 a.m. Kindergarten children returning to class. Dennis looks up but most students not bothered by the noise.

(Back to this morning.) When the attitude test names were announced, some of the students responded, "Why does Marnie always get chosen to do that?" "Was this a draw?" meaning were the names picked randomly. 10

Young child goes down hall making a funny noise. Most students laugh. Michelle says: "Stoned." 6 11

Differences in reaction to an event . . . different perceptions to happening . . . how perceptions are influenced by others before.

11:17 a.m. Richard poking around with fingers in his mouth. 2
11:19 a.m. Ross: "Do we have until lunch?"
JB to the class: "You still have over 30 minutes left." 5

Ross on math earlier did not want to continue because the students with the attitude survey did not have to do math. 10
Wendy finished one of the first and is reading. Martin has his game of CHAMPIONS out after the section of the test is finished. 1

Martin really restless. Matthew yawning broadly and leaning back in his desk at 11:32 a.m. Richard into his game. Michelle chooses to color her banner entry for decision on Thursday. 9
"Andrew, test is still on!" He goes to his math papers.
Elizabeth: "Mr. Brown, is this the same test each year?"
11:47 a.m. Mary Beth takes up spelling to ask a question.

JB: "Five minutes, for those of you who are still writing."
Ross has been particularly good this morning during the 7
test situation as he has been sitting quietly in his desk
without disturbing anyone. Martin over to Andrew. Tom over 1
to Andrew.
11:50 a.m. and time for the test to be over. David just
finished and Elizabeth reading over her work. 7
JB: "And, Stop!"
Lori writing like mad at some assignment. Marnie playing 1
with her Cabbage Patch dolls.

"This afternoon we will be going out to do some of our track work."
Jim explains to the class about the procedure for the kids 8
in the room to do the Family Time responsibilities with the
other rooms. Michelle has hurt her shoulder and cannot do the 2
push ups.
Also, first thing this afternoon JB will return the science 7
test.

Typed on pink paper

Sixthday
Wednesday, May 8 Noon

Martin, Andrew, Richard and Tom together.
Then John and Grant (John always seems to be on the 9
outside wanting to get in. He is making 3
moves socially that I have not seen him
make before.)

Ross always in sand—gets buried up to his neck by many 5
kids of all ages.

Ross leaves his jacket outside and looks for it in the Lost 9
and Found box. (In the meantime I brought it in.)

Ross throwing a great sock full of sand in the air—lands close 9
to someone—then he takes sand out of sock and puts it back
right <u>out</u> of the sandbox. I talk to him immediately and
explain that it is not him I dislike . . . He says, "It's my
behavior, right?"

Martin asked at lunch time about if (he) went out of the playground 11
to buy something. (He had been eating a frozen treat of some 10
kind.) He said that Geoff had got it for him.

(Red code for third quarter of the day.)

Sixthday 3
Wednesday, May 8, 1985

Continuation of the standardized test which was begun Monday and continued this morning. Room again quiet as students are working at 1:48 p.m. when I arrive. The afternoon is a little hotter; there is a little more movement and shuffling around. The noise of the custodian's vacuum clearner is in the hall and the clicking of the computer keys begins again part way through their test. 7 9

Can't tell whether or not this is a disturbance to them as they are very polite . . . will ask later.

Matthew sitting on his haunches. Michelle's knees and feet moving a little more this morning. Ross's turning around more than before. Richard continues to write, think . . . with pencil in his mouth. 1 2

Judith returned to school early this afternoon to work on a project for the Nutrition at School program for next year. The consultants will be at the staff meeting tomorrow and wish to hear a presentation as to why we think Green Hill would benefit from such a program. She is working on questions developed for an interviewer. 9
1:56 p.m. "There are approximately 30 minutes left." 9
—until recess when the test will be over.

Chart which is by the door says:

We are all people.
Sharing Strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears.
If you want me to understand, I will listen.
If you need me to understand, you must explain.

Wendy working with the calculator on some other project.
Judith: "Mr. Brown, number 129 is an unfair question." 10
JB: "Be with you in a minute, Judy."
Marnie hits the deck again. She has spent some time on the floor today looking ~~for~~ things in her desk . . . stretching, whatever. 1 9
2:04 p.m. Nancy checks her reading very carefully.
Tom (this morning)
Thinking about how to answer the question on the attitude survey about whether or not you like the principal . . . can't decide because, as he said: 10

"I like you as a person better than as a principal."
EB: "Can you think of one negative thing about me as a principal?"

(After a pause.)
EB: (Trying to explain) "It's really hard for me to differentiate me as a person from me as a principal.

(The K children call me the "Mommy" of the school. The 5/6 students know me basically as a teacher. Some of their confusion comes from the fact that they may have a preconceived notion of what a principal is, or should be, and the perceived role conflict comes from that.) — Methodology Comment?

Michelle over to Nancy. John over to put something in his pocket. There is considerable more movement about the room as some students wait for the others to finish than was the case this morning . . . although the time is the same (1 hour). They are, on the whole, fairly considerate of each other. — 1

JB: "As soon as everyone is in their desk, I'll dismiss the class." Andrew talking to Martin. Michelle continues talking to Nancy. Ross and Mark out of their desks. — 9 1

JB: "I take it no one wants to go for recess, then." Heads down, mouth closed, please. — 9

Typed on blue paper

Sixthday
Wednesday, May 8
P.M. Recess

Martin, Andrew, John and Grant playing games. — 3

Nancy and Lori together sitting on the fence by the Day Care. — 3

[ ] (Blue code for the fourth quarter of the day.)

Sixthday
Wednesday, May 8, 1985

JB explains procedures for a run of the Canada Fitness Tests. These students will keep score for the younger children tomorrow. Raw scores are explained. Expectations are explained for all. — 8 7

JB: "The rest of you line up. When you get out, line up with a partner." — 3

Martin stays behind. Andrew with Martin. Line is supposed to be straight and quiet and is not. Students dressed in varied array of all types of clothes. — 9 12

"As soon as I see a straight line with everyone in it with mouths closed. Right, Andrew?" "Then turn around, please." 9

David: "Amazing!" 6
Martin and Andrew bring up the read, Martin telling Andrew what to do.

(Copied to computer from handwritten field notes.)

Outside.

Partner work! Geoff and John. 6
"One pencil for every two, Ross. Those were my instructions." "Not so high, Martin."
David being totally disgusting pretending to **** in a hole and doing pushups in it. Dennis, Judith and Grant laughing outrageously. 6

Interesting that at this time David checks to see that the teacher is watching and is careful to not be caught in the act. He disregards the fact that I am there behind him—an indication that, if he things about it at all, I am the observer.

Methodology Comment

Ross behaving like a real child much younger than he is. 30° rise for the sit-ups is all that is necessary (what John's doing is enough). 6

Mark and Judith volunteer to stay after school to work on presentation for the Nutrition at School program. Mark has to (1) make a chart of all the junk food in a collage, and (2) tell how all the package wrappers were found. 9

APPENDIX E

SECOND COPY CODED STUDENT JOURNAL EXCERPTS

Elizabeth's Journal Excerpts

May 1, 1985

My Mom is back at work and she has been for about two months. She's feeling better, but still gets tired quickly. 4

May 7, 1985

My mom's birthday is coming up in May 29th. I don't know what to get her, and Mothers Day is close to so I have to hurry and get two presents. 4

We had to give away our doggie Cocker Spaniel "Dot" in the winter because she realy wasn't happy with us because she needs some company. With everyone gone to work and school all day, she got lonely. She is living with a retired lady not to far away, and she has a dog friend named "Chip." I'm not sure what kind of dog he is. 4

May 9, 1985

I've had to make supper for a few nights now because my mom had some meetings to tend to at one of the schools. She teaches at three schools and had some meetings at one I think. 8

May 10, 1985

Im not sure where Im going for grade seven yet, but I think Im going to either St. Mary or Glenhaven, Im probably going to St. Mary, unless my mom wants me to go somewhere else. 13

May 14, 1985

Im going to be starting my swimming lessons today. Im in level green. This will be my third time taking it, I hope I pass! 7

May 14, 1985

I had to send myself off to school today because my mom and the rest of my family slept in so when my mom left for work, she was supposed to leave at 7:30 but left at 8:00. My dad and my brother were leaving kind of late too. 8

May 16, 1985

Im kind of behind in all my subjects, and I dont know if and how Im going to begin to finish them. 7

May 17, 1985

Since I take swimming lessons all this swimming is tiring. (But worth it.) 1

May 22, 1985

The end of the week is coming up fast, and I will naturally be bored with nothing to do. 1

May 23, 1985

I didn't come earlier on thursday because I was kind of mixed up this morning, but I'll try to come for help on math at 12:30 or in the morning. 7

May 28, 1985

On Wednesday I have to get my braces tightened. It does hurt but my Mom and my brother tell me "in the end it's all worth it!" My brother had his on for 5 years. (he got them on when he was nine and got them off when he was 13, now he's 14.) 2

I get them off in about 1-2 more years.

May 30, 1985

I've been going to Mary Beths house for lunch, it's fun to have someone to eat with at lunch. 9

APPENDIX F

SECOND COPY CODED TRANSCRIPT OF STUDENT INTERVIEW

Tom

June 7, 1985

11:15-11:42 a.m.

Tom seemed sleepy and easy going. He exhibited signs of wanting to do well and give complete and complex answers.

He has an easy smile about him. He sat forward in his chair in order to speak clearly into the microphone at first but later sat back comfortably when he became relaxed.

Tom rubbed his arm throughout. Tom said he had been interviewed before in language arts class when they were role playing.

Tom June 7, 1985

11:15-11:42 a.m.

R: . . . being interviewed, and Tom, one of the first questions I'm going to ask is how did you find the adjustment to Green Hill many, many years ago?

T: It was different 'cause . . . There was different teachers, different ways the school was being run to other schools that I've been to . . . It was quite weird at the beginning because I was sitting in a desk at the back of the room and I didn't know anybody except for Richard and Matthew . . . way at the other side of the room. And all their friends and it looked quite strange. 13

R: How did you find adjusting to Green Hill?

T Ummm . . . it came quite naturally . . . 'cause Richard kept on showing me around and . . . when I first went around compared to Prince Henry, I though that the playground space was a little bit smaller but, all in all, it (the adjustment) was quite good. 13

R: Earlier in your journal you . . . we sort of wrote a bit about a problem that you have had with David Little. Can you give me a little bit more of a story of why your problem? 3 9

T: David usually, sort of, he's really pushy and sometimes, like in soccer, if a little kid takes a ball away from him, he'll go up to the little kid and trip him or step on him . . . and sometimes even when the bigger kids do, like around his age and size, he'll trip them and then they don't like it too much so they usually try to trip him back and then get something going. 3 9

R: And how did you become personally involved?

T: First time he was trying to beat up my sister. So I just got a little bit entangled with him. 3 9

(Phone rings and has to be answered.)

R: Back to the tape. Is it still going? (Tom chuckles.)

T. Yeh.

R: Tell me a bit more . . . so he was after your sister?

T: Yeh . . . It started at the beginning of grade 5 when I was first around him and my sister was out there and she . . . I think David was (blaming) her for something that someone else did and he started pushing her around. I went over and tried to break it up and then he tried to trip me and I just sat there trying to get away from him. Before I was kinda a little bit afraid of him and then it got to a point I was so mad I couldn't . . . I didn't care what I did to him. 3 9 3 9

R: And now?

T: Now I just mainly ignore him . . . 'cause . . . I know that usually if I do . . . if I try . . . If I get mad or anything, he knows that he's getting to me so he just keeps trying and trying and trying, so I guess . . . (I) give him a funny little shrug and then walk away. 3 9

R: I think you're handling it really well, actually. Ah, Tom, also in your journal you said at one time that when you were doing a test that you felt kind of sick. Is that something that happened that particular day or does this come on when you're in a tense situation?

T: Oh, I think it was just because I just had sort of a little bit of a cold the other night before so . . . 2

R: So you're not usually a sick kid.

T: No.

R: How do you feel about what happens when you leave Green Hill? Junior High and your future?

T: Well, yesterday, when I went over to put in my application form for Harrow Junior High, I walked in. There was two . . . they looked like grade 9 (students). One of them was fooling around with a knife, and the other was just sitting there talking to a girl and when (I) just walked in and (they) didn't say anything . . . walked out. They didn't say anything. 13

R: How about in terms of your subjects? What you're going to have to study?

T: Ummm. I've taken a . . . taken quite a thought at that sometimes. It's just sorta like starting grade 1 over again 'cause you go to 1 . . . grade 1 to 6, and then you gotta go to 7 to 12 . . . 'cause just like starting grade 1 over again. 13

R: But there's not any particular subject that really concerns you.

T: Not really, except the science. I'm not too keen on that.

E: OK. You did really well on the math test that you took earlier this year and yet you weren't totally pleased with your results. Can you talk about that?

T: Well, I just got over the 50 percentile mark and I never sort of realized that I got so good. I thought that . . . usually when it's under 70, it's not too well . . . done. 7

R: How did you feel that you did in the year end test that we did the other day?

T: Quite good! I did better than I thought I would 'cause (in) the first part I got two wrong, the next part I got three (wrong). 7

R: Right. Your mom and dad just recently got . . . well, your mom and your step-father just recently got married and yet you see your dad on holidays, don't you?

T: No. I don't even know what he looks like. 4

R: Is that right?

T: I only seen him when I was small and I don't think I was talking. 4

R: Do you ever think about him?

T: No. Not really. Hardly ever.

R: So you think about Mr. Dodge as your dad. So, how would you describe your family to me if I didn't know anything about them?

T: I usually have a very nosy sister that gets into everything that I want to keep private. My mom is usually doing things, like, usually, helping my sister and helping me and my dad is usually watching television and talking to me and sometimes he'll play games down in the basement. Sometimes it gets pretty fun. Sometimes it gets pretty boring. 4

R: What happens when it gets boring?

T: It gets boring, I start yawning. He starts noticing that I'm not paying attention and sorta gets . . . we just stop that usually go and watch television. 4

R: If I didn't know anything about your friends, how would you describe your friends to me?

T: Hardly ever home, 'cause usually Richard is never home. He's always at Shoppers' Mall with his parents and usually most of my friends are still over in the Prince Henry area but one student that used to live over right beside Harrow Junior High moved into the Burnham Apartments. He used to go to Prince Henry. I knew him since grade 1 and Martin moved. (He didn't move as in housing.) but he moved to Green Hill School. 3

R: Earlier, too, when Martin moved you really helped him adjust and, at one point, it kinda looked as though he might be taking some of your friends away from you. Can you talk about that? 3

T: When Richard and Martin started helping each other (they) kept on paying more attention to each other (than they did to me). Then they just . . . at recess they just go out and play by theirselves. And Martin would usually . . . always have these dumb practical jokes and that gets you pretty mad sometimes 'cause he makes up rumours in the classroom and then he keeps saying they're true until he knows that he's wrong and then he says, "I lied." And that gets pretty weird. He sets up really bad rumours that are so mixed up. 3

R: How do you manage to get that into perspective so that it doesn't become a real problem to you?

T: Well, usually, I'll just go . . . like at recess or something . . . I'll usually just go out and play soccer with a lot of people or something. Or if they're in the classroom, I'll just sit down at my desk and do something. 3

R: So, do you feel that you can control that?

T: Most of the time. Sometimes, it just gets so . . . out of hand that I have to just get mad at one of them.

R: You used to have an almost uncontrollable temper. How would you describe it now?

T: Ummm. I hardly ever blow my top now. Usually, I don't like blowing my top 'cause usually now or after I have a big headache that won't go away. 3 9

E: OK, Tom, you've been really helpful and you get a chance now to ask a question of me. Do you have a question that you want to ask me?

T: What did you first think when you came to Green Hill?